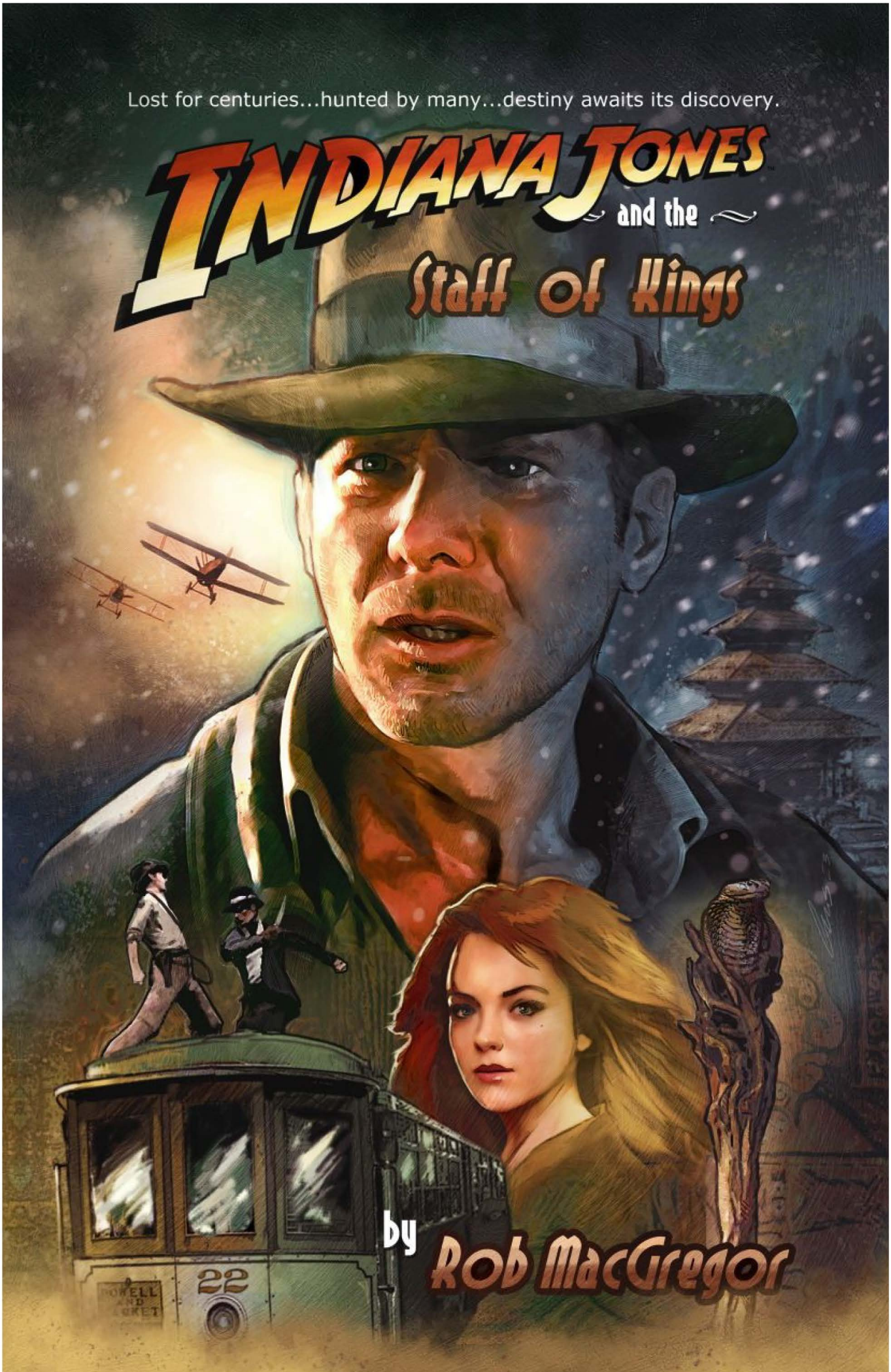
Lost for centuries...hunted by many...destiny awaits its discovery.
INDIANA JONES
and the
Staff of Kings
by
Rob MacGregor

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and the

STAFF OF KINGS

by

Rob MacGregor

Table of Contents

Front Cover
Disclaimer
Title Page
Preface
Chapter 1: Temple of the Cosmos
Chapter 2: On Campus
San Francisco
Chapter 3: Chinese New Year
Chapter 4: Star of the Orient
Chapter 5: The Jade Sphere
Chapter 6: The Staff of Moses
Central America
Chapter 7: Into the Jungle
Chapter 8: Up the River
Chapter 9: Uncharted Territory
Chapter 10: Beneath the Canopy
Chapter 11: The Lost Pyramid
Chapter 12: The Great Mother
Chapter 13: Mind Games
Chapter 14: Kingston's Notes
Istanbul
Chapter 15: The Sultan's Ball
Chapter 16: The Last Harem
Chapter 17: Under Pressure
Chapter 18: The Shepherd's Chamber
Chapter 19: Rampage
Nepal
Chapter 20: The Cloud City
Chapter 21: One More Surprise
Chapter 22: The Staff Temple
The Odin
Chapter 23: All Aboard
Chapter 24: No Escape

Chapter 25: God's Wrath
Chapter 26: Parting Ways
Afterword
Throw Me The Whip: Thanks
About the Author
What If...
Back Cover

Then the Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?”

“A staff,” he replied.

The Lord said, “Throw it on the ground.”

Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. “This,” said the Lord, “is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”

—Exodus 4:2-5

1
TEMPLE OF THE COSMOS

Darién Jungle, Panama
October 1921

Like a moth attracted to fire, Indiana Jones followed the glowing torch through the jungle. He'd heard there were *guaqueros*—grave robbers—in the area, but he was shocked and angry that they'd dared to dig while the expedition was working at the site. He figured, with any luck, he could drive them off himself. He might be outnumbered, but they wouldn't know it. He would surprise them and they'd flee into the night.

He hoped Professor Kingston, who had organized the expedition and brought along his top grad students, would appreciate his bold effort to protect the site. They were all excited about the chance to explore an unknown Mayan pyramid hidden in the jungle of southern Panama far from the Mayan centers of power in the Yucatan, Guatemala and Honduras. It would be groundbreaking work, in more ways than one. But it would be heart breaking if the site were looted the night before they entered the pyramid.

According to native legends, the pyramid, known as the Temple of the Cosmos, housed an enormous planetarium that was triggered to life by a mysterious jade sphere. However, if guaqueros made off with the sphere, it would disappear into the antiquities black market where it would probably fall into the hands of a wealthy collector who would consider it an ancient oddity, a curious anomaly—like a crystal skull. From an anthropological point of view, the jade sphere was far more valuable *in situ* – in other words, if it was linked with the pyramid and the planetarium.

Indy continued down the path, moving closer and closer to the flickering light that bobbed like a giant firefly through the jungle. He wasn't sure what he would do when he confronted the grave robbers, but he would improvise. Hopefully, there would be only a couple of them. As he neared the enormous pyramid, covered in vines the size of his thighs, he crouched low and crept forward. He'd first noticed the torchlight when he'd awakened around midnight, his bladder full, and climbed out of his tent. The bastards had walked right by their camp, as if to dismiss their sleeping competitors as unworthy.

Indy paused as the shadowy pyramid came into sight. Moonbeams filtered through the thick canopy draping the edifice, illuminating the green encrusted crown. The jungle buzzed with nightlife. The eerie call of an owl suddenly echoed through the jungle followed almost immediately by the yelp of a howler monkey. The chirr of insects provided a constant background rhythm to the night. Nearby, a low, deadly growl, possibly from a panther, issued from the darkness. A chill snaked up his spine. Indy jumped, looked around, and scrambled ahead. He stopped in an open area they'd cleared in recent days. He scanned the site, searching for the light, for any kind of movement. He noticed a glow emanating from near the base of the pyramid.

Not good. Not at all. They'd found the entry point. The guaqueros must've been hiding in the jungle, spying on them. Yesterday, Kingston had directed his eager crew to cut out a couple of base stones. They'd spent the past two days carefully drilling and chipping away at the edges of the stones until they'd been able to pull them out. Tomorrow they were going into the pyramid for the first time, but now it looked as if Indy were destined to enter it tonight to stop the looters.

He hitched the whip on his hip. It was a hobby he'd picked up as a teen and had perfected with long hours of practice, turning the whip into a weapon, an extension of his arms and legs, a means of expanding his ability to jump over open spaces, and even climb walls. He'd taken his share of kidding for carrying a whip at an archaeological site, but Professor Kingston didn't care as long as he didn't do anything stupid with it.

Right now it was his only weapon besides a knife with a three-inch blade. He hesitated, not knowing who or what he'd find inside the pyramid. A loud, angry cat scream accompanied by a thrashing in the nearby thicket behind him propelled Indy to the pyramid. He tugged on his new fedora, then crawled through the opening, more willing to face a human enemy than whatever creature lurked in the night.

The smell of dust and age, combined with the sooty odor of a torch, filled his nostrils. His nose twitched as he tried to avoid sneezing. He cautiously stood up and pressed his back against the wall of rock, blending into the thick shadows. He could feel the cold of the rocks against his leather jacket. There was just enough light so that Indy could make out a corridor along the inside of the wall of the pyramid and also steps leading downward directly ahead. His attention was immediately diverted to the left where someone moved slowly along a narrow corridor, torch in hand.

The man, about twenty feet away, paused a moment, looked back. The torch illuminated his features, and Indy held back a groan. It wasn't a guaquero. It was Magnus Völler, a fellow student. Völler, a German national, considered Indy his chief rival for Kingston's attention and approval. He was both brilliant and aggressive, and more than willing to undermine any attempt by Indy to surpass his intellectual acuity or physical prowess. No doubt that Völler was thinking ahead, plotting his way to the top, to be first among Kingston's heralded grad students, then into the archaeological world at large.

Indy, for his part, considered Völler an annoyance and far too rigid in his attitudes. While Völler was committed to archaeology, he tended to relate everything back to Germany, making connections that no one else fathomed. He also was appalled by Indy's behavior with coeds and the general debauchery on campus. Indy figured that Völler was frustrated by his inability to attract the interest of the

women on campus. But it was his own fault, what with his formal manners, aloofness, and a certain arrogance that everyone, not just the co-eds, found tedious.

He felt like snapping his whip around Völler's legs and yanking his feet out from under him. Völler knew as well as he did that Kingston demanded that everyone adhere to his protocol. That meant teamwork, following orders, and definitely no midnight freelancing. But Völler just had to get the jump on everyone else, especially on Indy, and apparently he was willing to cheat to achieve his goal, Indy thought. If Völler could locate the jade sphere tonight, he could promptly discover it in the morning. Surprise, surprise.

However, now that Indy had spotted him, Völler's little nighttime excursion could get him in serious trouble. All Indy had to do was turn around, head back to camp, and wake up Kingston. At the very least, Völler would be banished from camp. At the worst, he would probably be expelled from the program. Given the opportunity, Indy knew that Völler would do it to him. Yet, Indy didn't like the idea of tattling on his competitor, like a little kid.

Völler stopped and cocked his head to the side, as if he'd heard spirits of the ancients whispering in his ear. His face was illuminated, expression drawn with worry. Indy quickly moved up to him. "I'd be very careful, if I were you. This place could be booby-trapped."

Völler spun around, his features frozen in surprise and shock. Then he caught himself, raised his lantern jaw and peered imperiously down on Indy. "What are you doing here, Jones?"

"That's *my* question. I'm just following you."

"I am not here to steal anything, if that is what you think."

"Of course not. But what are you doing, taking a midnight tour?"

"Ya sure. You know, I like to be first. I came here to prepare for tomorrow. I want to find the jade sphere."

Indy moved closer to Völler. "If Kingston found out that you were in here contaminating the site, he'd send you back to Berlin on the next boat."

"Listen, Jones. You are here, too. You are as guilty as I am. We both contaminate it. Let's work together. We can share the glory. We will find the sphere tonight, then discover it again tomorrow for the professor."

Völler knew he was in trouble, so he was bargaining, trying to draw Indy into his plot. "I'm not very excited about sharing the glory

with you, Magnus. I'm leaving right now and you better do the same. But you're going to owe me a favor."

"Come, come, Jones. Where is your sense of adventure?"

"I'm saving it for my next girlfriend. C'mon, let's go."

Völler sighed, shook his head. "You are pathetic, Jones."

Indy heard a scraping sound from the far end of the corridor. "Rats?"

"You and the others were supposed to push the stones back in place, not leave it open for any sort of creature to crawl in here," Völler said.

Indy remembered that Völler had retired early after Kingston had said they wouldn't be entering the pyramid until morning. "I got news for you. We did put the stones back."

"Well, they were pulled out when I got here."

"I don't think rats did it," Indy said in a hushed voice. "Let's go take a look."

They moved cautiously along the stone floor, Völler following Indy with the torch held high, illuminating him like a slowly moving target for whatever awaited them in the darkness. They reached the end of the corridor without encountering man, beast or artifact.

Bolder now, Völler swung the torch from side to side as if fighting off an invisible enemy. Indy ducked as the flames grazed the side of his head. "Take it easy with that thing, Magnus. You're burning the hairs in my ear. Besides, it might go out, and I don't like the idea of being in here in the dark."

"There's nobody here," Völler said.

"Then who moved those stone blocks?"

As if in answer to his question, they heard the scraping sound again, but this time it was louder. They turned and Indy spotted an opening in the floor near the wall. As they edged closer, he noticed a dim glow emanating from the subterranean passage.

Indy pointed to a notch in the wall above the opening. "Leave the torch up there. We'll surprise whoever it is."

"I am not a fool, Jones." Völler jammed the torch into the wall. Clearly, he didn't like Indy giving him orders.

Indy touched his index finger to his lips, then crept down several steps. They followed another long, narrow passageway. With each step, the light grew brighter. They stopped as the corridor opened into a circular chamber. A sarcophagus filled the center of the

chamber where four men, garbed in filthy, tattered clothes, were slowly pushing the carved top of the stone tomb to one side.

"Grave robbers," Völler hissed as he moved past Indy. He was about to approach the guaqueros but Indy grabbed his arm and jerked him back. Völler angrily yanked his arm away, but then saw that Indy was pointing at an exposed pit. They leaned forward, looked down, and saw a bloodied man—probably one of the guaqueros—who'd fallen onto wooden spikes protruding from holes in the floor of the pit. Indy noticed the pit was big enough to accept a couple more unwary explorers.

One of the looters spotted them, shouted to his companions, and rushed toward them waving a machete. When he stopped on the opposite side of the pit, Indy snapped his whip and snagged the machete. The weapon dropped into the pit. Another of the looters hurled a knife and it sliced into the shoulder of Indy's leather jacket.

"Hey, that's a new jacket, fellow!"

Völler, meanwhile, moved around the pit and traded punches with two of the guaqueros. He was holding his own against the smaller men, who started to retreat. The big German grappled with one of the men, hauled him upward and abruptly tossed him into the pit. The man's shrieks echoed through the chamber, then leaked away, punctuated by gurgling noises as he choked on his blood. Völler grabbed the other guaquero and hurled him headfirst against the side of the tomb.

Indy heard a distinctive clicking sound, like a gear engaging. A grinding sound followed.

Völler laughed, then kicked his legs in a weird dance, and shouted: "Come, you little bastards. I kill you all."

Take it easy, Indy thought, astonished by how Völler was enjoying his savagery. In his exuberance, Völler lost track of where he was and suddenly slipped over the edge of the pit. He caught the rim with one hand and dangled in midair, his breathing loud, frantic, panicked.

Indy lunged, grasped Völler's free hand, and struggled to pull him up. Völler's eyes widened with terror. "Behind you! Here they come!"

But Völler wouldn't let go of his wrist and Indy couldn't defend himself. At any moment, he expected the guaqueros to shove him into the pit. To his relief, they raced past him toward the entrance to the chamber.

The men crawled beneath a stone barrier that was slowly descending in the doorway. He dug his heels in, pulled, and Völler clambered out of the pit.

"Hurry, before we get trapped here," Indy snapped.

Völler met his gaze, glanced toward the tomb, and Indy read his thoughts. They both leaped up and scrambled toward the tomb. Inside, a skeleton, partially covered with the remains of a tattered shroud, held the jade sphere. Indy lunged for it, but Völler tried to pull it away from him. They lifted it away from the skeleton, still struggling over it.

The grinding sound reminded Indy of their precarious situation. "Hey, I thought we were working together."

"Yes, you are right." Völler released his grip on the sphere, then slammed his fist into Indy's jaw.

The sphere slipped from his hands and rolled across the stone floor, heading directly toward the pit. Völler dived, caught it just as it was about to tumble over the lip. He laughed, scurried toward the entrance and rolled beneath the stone door. But at the last moment, his knee struck the sphere and it slipped from his grasp. Indy scooped it up, saving it again from the pit.

"Roll it here, quick!" Völler demanded. "We'll get you out."

"Come get it." The barricade closed with a thud.

Völler's muffled voice reached him through the wall. "Too bad, Jones. We might never find out what happened to you. You might become an artifact yourself."

"I never did like that guy," Indy muttered.

Now he heard another grinding sound emanating from the opposite side of the chamber. He carefully skirted the pit and found the torch the guaqueros had left behind in their haste. He held it up and spotted a second arched doorway on the opposite wall. Another stone barrier was sinking down.

Indy dropped to the floor, crawled under it with the sphere. He leaped up and cautiously moved forward. He followed a steep passageway that led to a corridor. Eventually, it took him back to the hole through which he'd entered the pyramid. Fortunately, Völler hadn't bothered pushing the stones back into the wall. Indy tucked the sphere under his jacket, slipped through the opening, then made his way back to camp.

When he arrived, torches were lit and several people were moving about the camp. He spotted Völler talking in an animated fashion to Kingston. He moved closer until he could hear the conversation. “Jones and I followed the looters into the pyramid, but they surprised us and killed Jones. I barely escaped.”

“This is terrible,” Kingston said. “Where is his body?”

“I do not know, Herr Professor. I saw them dragging him by his feet into the jungle.”

“No! That’s not exactly how it happened,” Indy said, stepping forward.

“My God, Indy!” Kingston shouted. “You’re alive!”

Indy reached into his jacket, extracted the jade sphere and handed it carefully to Kingston. “I think this is what you’re looking for. We saved it from the guaqueros.”

“But I don’t understand. Magnus said…”

“I know. It’s complicated, but I can sum it up this way.” He turned to Völler and slugged him in the jaw.

2
ON CAMPUS

Barnett College
January 1939

Indy was seated at his desk in his small, cluttered office, a stack of papers in front of him, and puffed on a pipe as he read a freshman paper, a tortured attempt to link the biblical flood with the destruction of Atlantis. As he finished, he flipped to the cover page and jotted: *First we need to document the existence of Atlantis before we can connect religious writings to its destruction. 'A' for imagination, 'C' for factual support.*

He'd asked the students in his introductory archaeology course to be bold and speculate on any aspect of ancient civilization and then to back it up with facts. They were great on the first part, weak on the latter, as this paper and the last dozen he'd read revealed. He still had more than a hundred to read.

A tap on his door interrupted his reverie. "Come in."

His good friend from the museum stepped inside. "Hello, Indy."

"Afternoon, Marcus. What brings you here?"

“I was just on my way to a meeting, but decided to stop by and convey some quite interesting news. Your old colleague, Magnus Völler, has an exhibition at the American-German Cultural Center in San Francisco. It sounds quite interesting. It includes bricks from the Tower of Babel, pieces of Jacob’s Ladder, and ancient Egyptian military artifacts from the bottom of the Red Sea. What do you say we go take a look? It could be quite worthwhile.”

Indy adjusted his tweed sport coat, then took off his wire-framed glasses and dropped them on the pile of papers. Marcus Brody was like a second father for Indy. He was intelligent and engaging, honest and straight-forward, the best sort of friend and associate. Under different circumstances he would’ve enjoyed traveling to San Francisco with him. But not this time.

“Sorry, Marcus.” He waved a hand toward his desk. “I’ve got papers to grade and a lecture to prepare for the Biblical Archaeology Society meeting coming up. Besides, Magnus Völler is not one of my favorite people, and I don’t care for the people he’s working for, either.”

“Oh, I understand that. I just thought that this would be a good opportunity for the two of you to make amends. He’s become quite influential, you know, and you have so much in common. You could help each other.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard that one before. Sorry again, but I just can’t run off at a moment’s notice anymore.”

“Of course, of course. I just wanted to pass along that tidbit. Looking forward to your lecture.”

As Brody walked out, the new department secretary, an attractive young woman who tended to distract Indy from his work, entered the office. She stood erect, shoulders back, her sweater tightening across her breasts. Indy made an effort to focus on her smiling face. “Hello, Jeanine.”

“Telegram for you, Dr. Jones. All the way from San Francisco.”

“Really.”

He reached for the envelope, but she held onto her end of it. “Is this a tug-of-war?”

“No, but I just want to say that I think you need to relax more. You’re always working. There’s a party tonight that I thought you might…”

“Jeanine,” he interrupted. “I’d love to go to a party, but I’ve got papers to grade.”

“Such dedication.” She pouted, her lovely mouth plunging at the corners, then smiled. “All right. But you can call me if you change your mind.”

He watched the sway of her hips as she walked out of the office. “Maybe next week,” he called after her.

He opened the telegram. *Prof. Jones - Troublemakers poking around, asking about Kingston and the jade sphere. Need your help. Come quick. – Archie Tan*

He lowered it, stared at the stack of papers, then re-read the telegraph. It was a surprise, yet it wasn’t. He’d known that someday a message from Archie Tan would arrive and he would fulfill a promise he’d made years ago. The timing wasn’t exactly to his liking, but San Francisco was calling. He pushed away from his desk, abandoned his office. As he passed Jeanine, he called over his shoulder, “I’ll be in San Francisco for a couple of days. Tell my teaching assistant that he’s in charge until further notice.”

“I thought you were busy, Dr. Jones.”

“I am.” He reached for the door, then paused. “And if Marcus Brody asks about me, just tell him I went into hiding. Not a word about San Francisco.”

“My lips are sealed. Is it a scholarly matter?”

He nodded. “Very.”

San Francisco

When the time comes for you to carry on my research, don't expect that you'll remain in the classroom for long. You'll have your work cut out for you. Unfortunately, it'll also mean that I died.

— *Charles Kingston, from a note to Indiana Jones, October 1931*

3
CHINESE NEW YEAR

He trudged through the gates of Chinatown and into a festive gathering that stretched for blocks. He wove his way through the crowd, passing costumed lion dancers and acrobats, floats and a marching band. Red paper lanterns, colorful streamers and flags hung from balconies above storefronts, and a huge inflated dragon, large enough to swallow a Studebaker, bobbed its way down the middle of the street.

Indy didn't need a calendar to figure out that he'd arrived in San Francisco on the Chinese New Year. But he wasn't in the mood to join the celebration. He needed to find Archie Tan as soon as possible. Years ago, Indy had promised Professor Charles Kingston, one of his mentors, that if Archie ever needed help, he would go to his aid without hesitation.

Kingston had introduced him to Archie and the two had gotten along well. Archie was a loyal friend and occasional colleague to both men, even though he was an old stalwart figure in the shadowy and sometimes nefarious world of San Francisco's import/export industry. Archie availed their archaeological expertise from time to time when artifacts came his way, and in return Archie helped Kingston in certain secretive dealings. Kingston never explained to

Indy the nature of that business, but had suggested that one day Indy would find out.

When Kingston mysteriously disappeared several years ago on an archaeological expedition to Nepal, Indy had been immersed in another research project, one involving the Ark of the Covenant. Upon hearing about Kingston's demise months after the fact, he'd immediately contacted Archie Tan. But Kingston's friend had offered neither clues nor resolution to Kingston's apparent murder. He'd also remained mum about his dealings with the professor. Now, however, Indy suspected that Archie was about to reveal the story of that partnership, and who knew what else.

Indy worked his way through the crowd and paused when he reached an opening. He noticed everyone was watching him and pointing at his feet. He sniffed an odor of sulfur, looked down to see an S-shaped blue snake with a thin trail of smoke coming from its tail. Just a toy, he thought, then it exploded, leapt and twisted as a string of hidden firecrackers discharged. The crowd roared as Indy danced away from the contorting plastic serpent.

"Chinese New Year. Great timing," he muttered, shaking his head.

A couple of blocks later, he turned the corner, away from the crowd, and headed down a narrow street. He stopped at Archie's address, knocked on the door of a row house. A girl, who looked about thirteen, answered. Behind her, Indy glimpsed more festivities, the preparations for a large family dinner.

The girl smiled. *"Guonian!"*

Indy remembered that the word meant, *Glad you made it through the old year*. But he had to think a moment to remember the proper response. *"Bainian!"* he answered, which meant congratulations on the New Year. "My name is Jones."

"Indiana Jones? I'm Suzie Tan. My grandpa Archie told me about you."

"Yeah, I'm looking for him."

The girl's features darkened. "But we don't know where he is. Maybe you can help find him."

A hand reached over the girl's shoulder and she was gently moved aside, as a middle-aged woman appeared in the doorway. "Can I help you, sir?"

"That's Dr. Jones, the one grandpa talks about," the girl said before Indy could reply.

The woman shook her head. “If you’re looking for my father, he has disappointed his family. He disappeared on one of his mysterious trips right before the New Year. He left without a good-bye.”

The girl’s head appeared between the doorframe and her mother’s arm. She gave a quick shake of her head, then moved away. “Thank you, madam. “Bainian!”

As the door closed, Indy glimpsed a red paper banner hanging in the hallway that read, FOOK. “Yeah, FOOK.” Ironic, he thought as he turned away. It meant fortune, but sounded like a curse spoken with a Chinese accent.

Indy headed deeper into the back alleys of Chinatown and away from the parade, the faint drumbeat of one of the marching bands echoing behind him, then fading. He focused on recalling the location of Archie’s shop, a place he had visited a couple of times, but not for several years.

The hair prickled on the back of his neck and he glanced over his shoulder. A man who walked with a limp and a cane trailed after him. Indy was certain he’d seen the guy near Archie’s house and quickly turned the corner, hurried down the street, and ducked into an alcove. As soon as the man appeared, he would confront him. Maybe he knew something about Archie.

A few seconds later, he heard footsteps, an exchange of Chinese, then three young toughs, Tong thugs, he suspected, walked past, accompanied by the older man with the cane. Indy decided they were probably more interested in mugging him than providing information.

When they were out of sight, Indy slipped out and moved quickly down the street in the opposite direction. He’d gone a couple of blocks when two more thugs stepped away from a doorway and blocked his path. They both pulled out formidable-looking knives.

“Not a good idea to go asking about Archie Tan,” one of them said. He was burly and wore a sleeveless vest that revealed a dragon tattoo snaking from shoulder to wrist.

The other one, a wiry, muscular man, grinned, revealing a silver tooth. “You scram or we cut you bad. Maybe we cut you, anyhow.”

Hands on hips, Indy carefully fingered the snap holding his whip in place beneath his leather jacket. The thugs came closer, their knives whistling through the air. The sight of the knives reminded

Indy of a stray fact about the Chinese New Year that he'd learned during a fling with a co-ed from Hong Kong while an undergrad.

"You know it's bad luck to carry a knife, or even a scissors, on the Chinese New Year. You might cut your luck for the year ahead."

"Ha, ha, you very funny," Silver Tooth said. "But we don't believe those old grandma tales."

"He does." Indy nodded toward Dragon Arm, who had lowered his knife. Silver Tooth said something in Chinese to him, and Indy took advantage of the moment.

He unfurled his whip and, before they could react, lashed it around the legs of both men. He jerked hard and they toppled over, crashing into each other and slamming into the ground. Dragon Arm dropped his knife and Indy kicked it away as he shook the whip free. Silver Tooth bounced to his feet, cursed Indy, and lunged at him with the knife. Indy chopped his arm with the hilt of his whip, and the knife clattered to the sidewalk. Indy tripped him, shoved his knee into the thug's back, and wrapped the whip around his neck.

Dragon Arm, meanwhile, retrieved his knife and stomped forward. Indy pulled the gagging Silver Tooth to his feet and used him as a shield. Indy leaned forward and hissed, "Tell him to drop that knife or you've taken your last breath."

Indy let up a moment and Silver Tooth spat a few words. Dragon Arm tossed the knife aside. Indy released Silver Tooth and pushed him forward toward his buddy. The men faced Indy again, as if they were preparing for another round. But when they saw him raise his whip, they backed away, turned, and raced down the cobbled street. As they disappeared into the darkness, Indy called after them. "Bainian!"

Indy hurried away before the thugs found more of their kind and regrouped. He weaved through the streets, past strings of paper lanterns, putting distance between him and the thugs. He slowed when he recognized a teahouse from his last visit. Archie's shop was located three doors down. No need to knock; the door hung slightly open. He pushed it gently with his foot, slipped inside, and stood quietly in the dark, listening. The place was silent, not even the scratching patter of a scurrying rat. He struck a match, held it above his head revealing a shop that looked like it had been upended by an earthquake.

Display cases of goods were gutted, everything tossed about. A desk had been tipped over, the drawers dumped, their contents strewn across the floor. A file cabinet had been emptied, files hurled everywhere. There was hardly room to walk.

He found a light switch, flipped it on. A bare bulb, hanging by a thread from the ceiling, flickered on. He scanned the mess, shook his head, muttered: “Life on the rough and tumble Barbary Coast. Where are you, Archie?”

As he stepped past an unturned desk, he kicked a shoebox of papers that spilled to the floor. He pawed through them, but found nothing of significance. As he stood up, he glimpsed a ceiling fan lazily circling overhead. He looked closer and saw something taped to the underside of one of the vanes. He pulled a chair under the fan, stepped up, and snagged a piece of paper. It was folded in half and his name was written on the outside. He read the brief, hastily scribbled note.

Indy -- Star of the Orient.

That was it. No explanation. Had he been interrupted or was that all he intended to write? Maybe Archie had gotten into trouble over an artifact or a diamond. But what did that have to do with Kingston and the jade sphere, the subject of Archie’s note? Archie certainly had friends right in San Francisco who could help him. No, the reason Archie contacted him dealt with the past, with Kingston, and there was a reason he needed to get involved.

He heard a creaking sound. Someone was standing by the door just out of sight. He jammed the note into his pocket, reached for his whip. The Tong thugs must’ve tracked him here. He started to move toward the wall, hoping to surprise whoever it was. But he tripped on an overturned file cabinet, crashing to the floor.

“Are you all right, Dr. Jones?”

Indy lifted up on his knees. A dark-haired girl poked her head inside the door. He stood up, hiding his embarrassment. “Suzie! What are you doing here? Does your mother know you’re here?”

She stepped into the shop and didn’t seem surprised by the mess. “I snuck out. My grandfather didn’t want my mother to get involved. She worries too much. But he told me you would help him.”

“Where is he?”

Before she could answer, the door banged open and three men in trench coats burst into the shop, weapons drawn.

"Tell us, too, young lady," said one of the men, speaking in a German accent. He wore a brimmed hat low over his forehead. "We want to talk to him about an important matter."

Suzie started to bolt away, but two of the men caught her. Indy rushed forward as she fought to free herself, but was stopped by the muzzle of a revolver aimed between his eyes.

"Another step and you're dead, Jones!"

"Oh, you know me. I don't think we've met."

"Stay out of the way, professor, or you will end up dead, like Kingston. That's all you need to know."

"Let me guess. You're Gestapo agents and you're working for Magnus Völler. That figures," Indy said.

Suzie screamed, struggled. One of them clamped a hand over her mouth and she bit hard into the soft tissue between thumb and forefinger. He howled, releasing her, waving a bloodied hand. But the other man held her firmly and stuffed a rag into her mouth, silencing her.

"Let her go," Indy shouted. "She's a kid, out past her bedtime."

"Not until she talks." The Gestapo agent kept his weapon and his gaze aimed at Indy, while he talked to the girl. "Show us where your grandfather is hiding the jade sphere. Then we will let you go."

Suzie tried to say something, but it sounded as if she were talking underwater. The man motioned for one of his cohorts to pull out the rag. She gasped for air. "I'm… I'm not telling you Nazis nothing," she spat.

"You tell us now, or your friend dies."

"But I don't know anything."

"I count to three, then I kill Jones. One…"

"I don't know. He would never tell me anything like that."

"Two…"

"No, please, don't shoot him."

"Three!"

* * *

Across town, Magnus Völler stood in the wings of the stage as the director of the American-German Cultural Center chatted at the

podium about the center's activities. Eventually he would introduce Völler to the crowd of dignitaries from San Francisco's art and political world.

As he waited, Völler thought about how his personal history had brought him here. Disgusted by the humiliation of his country in the aftermath of the war, he'd eagerly joined the Nazi Party upon his return to Germany. He was fascinated by the Fuhrer's search for religious artifacts, but infuriated that the job had been handed to a Frenchman. After the Ark of the Covenant incident in 1936 and the Holy Grail episode two years later—that one under the auspices of an American expatriate—Magnus finally took over the position. His Nazi superior Heinrich Himmler, gave him the title of *Oberarbeitsleiter*, director of the project.

Under his control, *Verteidigung Germanisches Altertum* (Defense of German Antiquities) had become one of the most powerful departments within the SS. He reported directly to Himmler and could draw on the resources of the regular army, the Waffen-SS, and the Gestapo to accomplish his goals. After securing several biblical artifacts—bricks from the Tower of Babel, pieces of Jacob's Ladder, Dead Sea Scrolls and fragments of the Septuagint, Völler was now focusing on one of the truly sacred artifacts—the staff of Moses—and the trail had taken him to San Francisco.

While he was exhibiting his biblical discoveries, his men from the Gestapo were busy hunting for another artifact that his old professor had cleverly used to hide his secrets. One way or another, Völler would find the staff and claim it for the homeland. Whatever it took.

One of his aides came to his side, whispered in his ear. Völler smiled, nodded. "*Gut*. *Gut*. Very good."

4
STAR OF THE ORIENT

A fraction of a second before the Gestapo agent finished counting to three, Indy leaped and latched onto the insulated electrical cord dangling overhead. He swung forward as the cord snapped, darkening the shop, and kicked. His foot struck the Nazi's hand just as he fired. Indy dropped to the floor, his ears ringing from the report of the gun. One of the agents groaned and collapsed. *Nice shot*. He'd hit one of his own men.

Indy took advantage of the confusion, grabbed Suzie's arm and they scurried toward the door, and raced down the street. There were times to face an enemy and times to flee. This one was definitely the latter. He was sure Völler was behind this incident, that Völler was looking for the jade sphere. After all these years, he wanted to steal it from a dead man's hands, maybe as payback. Kingston had expelled Völler from his program, citing his behavior during the Panama expedition. But maybe something more was involved. Völler had returned to Germany, finished his studies, and joined the Nazis. Now he was helping Hitler recover biblical artifacts, but what did that have to do with a Mayan artifact?

"Follow me," Suzie said.

They zig-zagged their way through Chinatown for several minutes. Indy couldn't tell if Suzie was leading him somewhere or just attempting to evade any pursuers. He didn't know which ones were worse – the Tong thugs on their home territory or the Nazis far from home.

Finally, Suzie stopped near a courtyard, surrounded by two-story buildings. Indy looked back, saw no one was following. He turned to Suzie. "Do you have any idea what happened to your grandfather?"

"I think the Tong Gang is holding him."

"Where?"

"I don't know, but I know where you might find out." She pointed to a building across the courtyard that was illuminated by hanging red lanterns. The sign above the door read: Lao Che Lounge.

"Go into that nightclub and ask for Blind Duck. I don't think the Tong really kidnapped Grandpa. The Tong and Grandpa work together sometimes, helping each other. I think they are protecting him from the Nazis."

"They definitely didn't like *me* asking about his whereabouts."

"You met the Tong?"

"A couple of them. They came after me with knives."

She looked surprised. "On New Year's Day?"

"Yeah, they didn't make an exception." He glanced at the nightclub, then back to Suzie. "Do you want me to walk you home before I go over there?"

"No, I know these streets. I live a couple of blocks from here."

* * *

Indy crossed the street and walked into the nightclub. Dance music blared and a trio played jazz in the stylishly decorated club. Several tables were occupied, but in the dim lighting from the red lanterns, it was difficult to see faces. He decided to try a direct approach assuming that Suzie was right and the Tong was protecting Archie. He sidled up to the bar and handed the bartender the telegram. "That's from Archie Tan. He needs my help. I was told to ask for Blind Duck, that he would help me find Archie."

The bartender stroked his mustache, handed the message back to him. "Take it to the guys at the end of the bar."

“Thanks.” Maybe he would get lucky and find Archie waiting for him, perhaps in a room upstairs.

Two men were huddled over drinks as he approached them from behind. “Gentlemen, I understand you know Archie Tan.”

The men turned on their stools and Indy gulped as he stared face-to-face with Dragon Arm and Silver Tooth. “Oops! I guess we’ve already met.”

The big tattooed goon slid off his stool and grabbed Indy by the throat. “You think you can walk in here and walk out alive? Think again.” He slammed his fist into Indy’s gut.

Indy gasped and doubled over and Silver Tooth poked his knife blade under Indy’s eye and leaned into his face. “Didn’t we tell you to leave Archie Tan alone?”

“I’m not a Nazi. I’m his friend.” Indy’s voice sounded choked.

“I don’t care who you are,” Silver Tooth said. “You’re not going to look for Archie Tan.”

Dragon Arm, still grasping Indy’s throat, punched him again. “Because the rats are going to eat your dead body for dinner tonight in the sewer.”

This wasn’t going well, Indy thought, gasping for air.

The Tong thugs were distracted by the bartender who shouted, but not at them. “Get those damned pigeons out of here!”

“Pigeon Man,” Dragon Arm muttered in disgust.

Indy glimpsed a gangly young Chinese man standing halfway up the staircase. He wore ragged clothes, and a hat with a brim on the front and back. Two pigeons were perched on each shoulder. He said something that sounded like an order and the birds took flight.

Indy took advantage of the distraction to knee Dragon Arm in the groin. He bent over in pain and loosened his grip on Indy’s throat. Silver Tooth tackled Indy around the legs, knocking him to the floor, and Dragon Arm piled on him. Indy struggled, twisted and turned, but couldn’t break free.

The pigeons circled around the nightclub a couple of times, then swept down, attacking Dragon Man and Silver Tooth, clawing and pecking at their faces. Dragon Arm bellowed, let go of Indy, who ducked low to avoid the pigeon assault. When he looked up, Pigeon Man motioned for him to climb the stairs.

Indy hesitated, debating whether or not to bolt for the front door, rather than go any deeper into the Tong nightclub. But he was

curious about Pigeon Man and the guy might've saved his life. He raced for the stairs. "Follow me," the man said, abandoning his birds, and vaulted up the remaining stairs.

They hurried down a hall, past several doors. Pigeon Man threw open the last door, revealing more stairs leading up to another door. The pigeons swept in behind Indy, fluttered around their heads, as they climbed the stairs and exited onto the roof.

"This way now. You come quickly, Jones."

So the guy knew his name, Indy thought, but there was no time to ask questions. Pigeon Man raced across the roof and leaped to the next building. Indy quickly measured the distance in his mind and knew he could make it, as long as he didn't trip in mid-stride.

"Hurry, hurry. Don't think about it," Pigeon Man called.

Indy ran and leaped. Behind him, he heard the door to the roof of the nightclub slam open, heard the men cursing as the pigeons swept in for another attack. Indy kept running and followed Pigeon Man across several roofs. He stopped thinking about the distance to the ground and just focused on the jump.

On the fourth one, Indy followed Pigeon Man's path and hurtled the gap. Belatedly, he saw that the next building was another story taller and Pigeon Man had leaped to a ledge. Indy crashed into the wall, then slid off the ledge, clinging to it with one forearm, then the other. Pigeon Man reached down, helped him up.

As they sidled along the ledge toward the rear of the building, Indy demanded answers. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"No time for introductions. We keep going."

"We, uh, have time right now," Indy insisted. "Who are you? And don't say Pigeon Man."

"That's what people call me because I live on the roofs and train pigeons."

"To attack people?"

"Some carry messages for me, others will peck out your eyes, if you make trouble, like those Tong guys."

"How did you know my name?" Indy asked as they reached the corner of the building and scrambled down a fire escape.

"My cousin, Suzie. I was following you two from the roofs. After you left her, she asked me to help you."

"So you know Archie?"

"Of course. He's my grandfather, too."

Indy dropped the last few feet to the ground next to Pigeon Man. “Do you know where he is?”

“I do now. I followed the Tong tonight and saw where they took him.”

Now they were getting somewhere. “Can you show me?”

“Of course. C’mon.”

Neither of them spoke as they wound their way through a series of back alleys. They moved swiftly past shops—most of them closed. The alley seemed to get darker, tighter, more isolated. Indy hurried to keep up to the rapid pace of Pigeon Man.

They walked through a haze of steam rising from a manhole cover, then reached a gate at the end of an alley. It creaked as Pigeon Man pulled it open and they crept into a dingy junkyard. Indy didn’t like the feeling of the place. His hand slid to his hip and he fingered the whip, realizing that he might be walking into another life-threatening situation.

They moved between piles of twisted metal, junked cars, and discarded furniture. Finally, Pigeon Man pointed to a trapdoor partially hidden amid the rubble. “Archie is down there.”

“Are you sure?”

“I know this place. I’ve come here with Archie. But now I see the Tong here for several days. I follow and listen. Archie is here, guarded by the Tong.”

“What’s down there?”

Pigeon Man laughed. “Go look. Not what you expect to see underground.”

Indy lifted the trapdoor, peered into a pitched black nothingness that smelled of dust and age. “It’s kind of dark in there.”

“The lanterns are at the bottom of stairs ,” Pigeon Man said.

Indy lit a match, but still couldn’t see anything, other than a ladder. “Are you coming with me?”

No answer. He looked around, but there was no sign of him. Pigeon Man had flown the coop. He climbed down the ladder, paused on a metal platform about ten feet above the ground. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he found himself in an enormous cavern. In the center of it was the last thing he expected to see. Incredibly, an old clipper ship, dimly illuminated by lanterns, was buried beneath the city.

He descended the stairs to the floor of the cavern, found a lantern, lit it and started toward the ship. He froze as he heard the click, like the sound of a gun being cocked.

"Hold it right there!" A slender Chinese man with white-streaked hair and wire-framed glasses stepped forward into the light. He aimed a pearl-handled .45 at Indy. Two larger men, no doubt Thugs, hung back several feet. "Gestapo?"

Indy lifted the lantern. "Me, never. Indiana Jones, archaeologist, friend of Archie Tan."

The man gazed at him through glasses as thick as the bottom of a Coke bottle. "I've heard your name, Dr. Jones. A man of adventure and intrigue."

"A professor, really."

He laughed. "Of course. And I am a simple nightclub owner."

Yeah, who happens to be standing in a cavern under a junkyard, Indy thought. He realized he was talking to the Tong boss, the man who was holding Archie. Amazingly, so far, no one had taken a swing at him or swiped a knife blade his way. "Didn't catch your name."

"Wu Ming. But you can call me Blind Duck." From the sly smile, Indy suspected both names were false.

Blind Duck shook his hand with a grip that reminded Indy of the claw on a large predator bird. "Your reputation is well known, Dr. Jones. But I need proof that you are who you say. Give me the code."

"The code? Ah, what code?"

The Tong boss crossed his arms, waited.

Archie hadn't given him any code. Neither had Suzie. He took a guess. "*Fook!*"

Blind Duck scowled. Indy flashed a grin. "Just kidding." He remembered the brief note he'd found taped to the ceiling fan in Archie's ransacked shop. "Star of the Orient."

He couldn't tell if he'd guessed right. Blind Duck's expression remained appropriately inscrutable. "You go to the ship now, Dr. Jones. No time to waste."

"Where's Archie?"

"He's waiting for you, Dr. Jones." Blind Duck gestured toward the ship.

"What's Archie doing there?"

"It's his hiding place while we protect him from the Nazis. If they catch him, they'll torture and kill him to find an important artifact, a

jade sphere. You know about it?"

"Yeah, I've heard of it."

"I'm going to tell you the same thing I told Archie. When you leave the ship, you bring me the jade sphere, Dr. Jones. We can protect it much better than Archie can. The Nazis will never find it."

"Why don't you go get it yourself?"

"There's one problem," Blind Duck said. "Archie booby-trapped the ship. We're trying to help him, but he's making it difficult for himself. But maybe he'll help you get around the traps, that is, if he'll talk to you."

"Why wouldn't he?"

"We haven't seen or heard a word from him for three days."

5
THE JADE SPHERE

Indy was instantly suspicious. He figured Blind Duck was telling him half-truths. The Tong Gang might be protecting Archie, but he guessed they had their own interests at heart. The jade sphere no doubt had value on the black market, especially if sold to the Nazis. But Blind Duck wasn't willing to sacrifice his own people in order to find it.

Send Archie's old buddy down there instead. Let him take the chances. Unfortunately, Indy's choices at the moment were limited: Climb back up and face a bullet from Blind Duck or explore the ship. As he started across the cavern, he heard angry shouts and a screech from above. Suzie's voice rang out as a Tong thug dragged her through the trapdoor and down the ladder to the platform.

"Let me go," she screamed. "Stop twisting my arm, you bastard."

"I found her snooping around asking questions about her grandfather," the thug called out to Blind Duck. "She's the one who led *him* to the lounge." The thug pointed down at Indy.

"Then she can go with him," the Tong boss answered.

"Gladly," Suzie shouted, broke away and ran down the steps and over to Indy.

"I don't need any assistants," Indy countered.

“I was just trying to help.” Tears welled in her eyes. “Please, Indy, let me go with you.”

Indy looked grim. He didn’t need any more complications. “C’mon, but you’re not boarding the ship. No way.”

They quickly headed toward the vessel. “You should be in bed sleeping,” Indy reprimanded.

“But I found out stuff you need to know.”

Indy kept his gaze on the ship. “Like what?”

“The Tong is double-crossing Grandpa. They want whatever it is that’s down here.”

“Thanks. Only thing is I already figured that out.”

“Sorry. Grandpa had to work with them. He’s been getting things from this ship for years, he told me.”

Indy stopped near the port bow. “Interesting. A clipper ship from the Gold Rush era.” He stepped closer and read the faded name on the hull: “Ah, *Star of the Orient*. That makes sense.”

He approached a ladder that led to the deck, then turned to Suzie. “Wait here for me.”

“You better move the ladder, or you might fall through the deck and onto some rusty spikes.”

Punji sticks, a classic booby trap, he thought. “How do you know about that?”

“I was down here with Grandpa when he was setting it up. He told me about some of the other traps, too.”

“Really. Well, in that case, I guess you can come along.” Indy carried the ladder toward the center of the ship. “He didn’t happen to tell you where he hid the jade sphere, did he?”

“He didn’t want me to know.”

He climbed to the deck, noticing the steep slant from bow to stern. He carefully tested the planks before moving ahead. In spite of the lantern, he could only see a few feet in front of him. “Stay behind me,” he told Suzie.

He spotted another lantern hanging on a line, reached for it. Then froze. He looked up and saw a large burlap sack hanging ten feet overhead. He stepped back, found a pole with a hook on the end, and carefully lifted the lantern. The line shot up and the sack fell with a heavy thud right where he’d been standing. It split open, spilling sand. He reeled in the lantern, inspected it before lighting it, then handed it to Suzie. “That would’ve hurt. Why didn’t you warn me?”

“Didn’t know about that one,” she said with a shrug.

He peered across the dimly lit deck, then called out. “Hey, Archie! Can you hear me? It’s Indiana Jones. I got your message. I’m with Suzie, your granddaughter. Where are you?”

No answer.

With cautious steps, Indy moved toward a hatchway that led down to the lower decks. He leaned over to lift it, paused, glanced back to Suzie.

“Watch out for that rope next to you,” she said. “Grandpa was setting some kind of booby trap over there.”

Indy leaned over, studied the coil of rope, and noticed a thin steel cable beneath it. The cable was attached to the side of the elevated hatchway and extended across the deck to a stack of barrels. He stood up, brushed his hands. “That was close. If I lifted the hatch, the cable would free those barrels and they’d roll right over us.”

“Grandpa said he filled them with water.”

“Archie is very clever. I just hope he’s not too clever.” Indy moved aside and inadvertently stepped on the coil of rope. His foot was immediately entangled, the rope snapped up and he was lifted twenty feet into the air where he dangled upside down in the rigging.

“I told you to watch out for the rope,” Suzie yelled.

Indy swayed slowly back and forth, hanging by his ankle, and tried to figure out how he was going to get out of this predicament. He noticed another line in the rigging that was anchored to the deck and tried to swing over to it. He gradually picked up momentum and reached out for the line, but his fingers missed each time by several inches. Finally, he loosened his whip and snagged the other line. He pulled himself over to it, then worked his ankle free and lowered his legs before sliding down the line.

“Thanks for the warning.”

If the Tong boss hadn’t threatened to kill him, he would be ready—more than ready—to abandon ship. Then again, he remembered his vow to Charles Kingston. He’d promised to help Archie when the time came and it had definitely arrived. Although Kingston never specified it, Indy had always suspected that protection of the jade sphere was at the heart of the matter. He moved cautiously across the deck, Suzie close behind him, watching every step, until he reached a ragged-edged hole. A heavy chain, wrapped about the foremast, hung down through the hole.

It looked like another trap, but at this point everything was suspect. He studied the chain, tested it. He jerked harder, looked around, hoping that he didn't unleash some new assault. When nothing happened, he lowered the pole he'd used to snare the lantern and tapped on the lower deck. Satisfied, he climbed down the chain and dropped into an interior officer quarters. Suzie passed him the lantern.

"Stay there while I look around. Call me if you see anyone coming toward the ship."

He moved through several cabins, opening cabinets and closets, periodically calling out to Archie. He climbed down to another deck where ropes and cables, and an anchor and chain, were stored.

He peered down into the dark hold. Something valuable must've been stored here and buried with the ship, Indy thought. Otherwise, Archie wouldn't have gone to all the trouble of digging out the cavern. He imagined how many laborers had hauled out bucket after bucket of dirt and whatever else was buried around the ship.

"Archie?"

He climbed into the hold, hoping he wouldn't find Archie's body. Rats scattered when he kicked over an empty wooden box. Cockroaches fell from the beams overhead onto his shoulders and hat. He shook off the vermin, and scrambled back up to the cabins.

Hands on his hips, he looked around. He was relieved that he didn't find Archie and was starting to wonder if Blind Duck had lied about Archie being on the ship. But he was fairly certain the jade sphere was here. Blind Duck wasn't lying about that.

An idea came to mind. *Ah ha, of course*.

He climbed out of the hold and headed to the companionway that led to the booby-trapped hatch, shimmied up the ladder, but didn't touch the hatch. If he pushed on it, the barrels would be released and Suzie would get crushed. He remembered that the hatch was elevated above the deck, but the bottom, he could see, was level with the deck. That meant there was a concealed compartment within the hatch.

He ran his fingers lightly over the wooden surface, and found a discreetly hidden lever disguised as molding. He started to move it to one side, but hesitated. It could be another trap. He imagined Archie Tan filling the hatch with snakes that would fall on him, slither down inside his shirt, his spine, and into his pants. He shuddered at the

thought, but rationalized that the snakes would be dead or comatose by now.

"Indy, where are you?" Suzie called.

"Over here, below the hatch."

"Any sign of Grandpa?"

"Not yet."

She sounded closer now, right above him. "Be careful."

He moved his hand along the hatch and found a second disguised lever. Why two of them? He wondered. Then he saw a fine wire leading from the hatch to an interior wall. One of the levers opened the hatch, the other triggered another trap. *Good going, Archie.*

Back down the ladder he went. He picked up the pole, pressed the hook against one of the levers, pushed, and triggered a three-foot-long, spring-loaded blade that shot out from a hidden opening in the wall. It would've gone right through his neck.

With great caution, he moved the other lever with the pole. This time an interior section of the base of the hatch slid a couple of inches to one side. No booby traps. He climbed back up the ladder, reached around the blade, and opened the bottom of the hatch. At first, it looked hollow and empty. Then he spotted a wooden box built into the interior wall of the hatch. He reached up and, using a knife, pried open the cover of the box. He reached inside and found a leather drawstring bag containing a spherical object.

He carefully lifted the bag out and climbed back down to the mid-deck. He opened the sack and in the light of the lantern saw a deep green sphere with symbols etched into its surface.

"Got it!" he called up to Suzie.

But there was something else in the bag. He reached inside and pulled out a piece of paper.

Congratulations, Indy! I hope it's you reading this. You probably got Tong waiting for you to come out with the sphere. Stay low on the deck. Go to the starboard side. Crawl into the lifeboat. There's a lever you can use to lower the boat. They'll be watching the other side by the ladder.

Run to the corner, away from the stairs. Look for a small hole in the wall. That's your way out. Good luck!

“Thanks, Archie, wherever you are.” He folded the note into his pocket and hurried along the lower deck until he reached the hanging chain. He was about to climb it when Suzie suddenly scrambled down it and dropped next to him.

“The Tong are on deck,” she whispered urgently.” I think they heard you say you got it.”

“Jones, you come now. We’ll take you to Archie Tan. He’s waiting for you,” said Blind Duck.

Certain it was a ruse, he passed the sphere to Suzie, touched a finger to his lip, then climbed the chain. The Tong boss, gun in hand, stood near the hatch, his back to Indy. Several thugs were positioned across the deck, waiting. He ducked his head, crawled back down, and took the sphere back.

“C’mon.”

Indy led the way back to the companionway and started up the ladder. “I’m coming up!” he yelled.

He heard shouts in Chinese, footfalls as the thugs gathered around. Suzie tugged on his arm. “He told them to get the artifact first, then kill you.”

“Smart plan. But I’ve got a better one.”

He went up another step, pounded on the bottom of the hatch. “Help me open the hatch. It’s stuck now.”

Blind Duck ordered his men to help. The hatch lifted a few inches, then flipped all the way up and the thugs stared down at him, two of them aiming revolvers. A rumbling erupted. They turned, stared, then shouted in panic and belatedly scrambled away as a couple of dozen thundering, water-filled barrels bore down on them.

When the rumbling stopped, Indy motioned for Suzie to follow him. He stuck his head up, then ducked as a tardy barrel rolled past over the hatch. This one was red, while the others were black, and something was leaking from it. Not water, but gasoline! It rolled over one of the abandoned lanterns and instantly a trail of fire raced toward the barrel.

Indy clambered out, Suzie behind him, and they darted across the deck to the starboard side, as Archie had suggested. He looked back to see the fire quickly spreading, flames leaping, burning, crackling, racing. The Tong thugs scrambled to help their injured buddies. Indy and Suzie made it into the lifeboat before the gasoline barrel exploded. Plumes of fire and greasy smoke billowed toward the

cavern roof. Metal shards and burning scraps pelted the deck and Indy and Suzie ducked under the canvas covering.

"Grandpa!" Suzie shouted, and Indy spun around.

Archie, his face covered with dirt and soot, his wrinkled clothes a testament to his time in hiding, sat up in the boat. "Archie! So this is where you've been hiding."

"Hello, Indy. No, I've got a better hiding place. We can go there now. Pull that lever by your head." He hugged his granddaughter and they exchanged a few words in Chinese.

Indy lifted the canvas, found the lever, tugged, and the boat slowly descended to the floor of the cavern. They all climbed out.

"Indy, we go to the sewer now. I show you where I was hiding," Archie said.

As far as Indy could tell, the Tong thugs were disabled or preoccupied with saving the wounded from the fire. "Let's just go through the junkyard. I don't really need a tour of the sewer at this point."

As soon as they started for the stairs, two more Tong appeared. One of them pointed, bellowed in Chinese, and clambered down the steps. Indy hesitated, reached for his whip when he didn't see any guns in their hands. "I think I can handle these guys."

Another half dozen thugs followed, shouting and pointing their guns, every one of them armed. "Then again, let's try your way, Archie." Indy whirled, grabbed Suzie's arm and ran back to Archie.

"If you would have listened to me, we would be safe now," Archie scolded.

"Yeah, well, I'm a little hard-headed sometimes," Indy called over his shoulder.

They ran past the burning ship to the far corner of the cavern, but Indy didn't see any way out.

"Over here!" Suzie squatted next to a narrow hole barely visible in the shadows.

"That's it?" Indy asked.

"It very tight, but we fit, you see," Archie said.

"Maybe if you're skin and bones," Indy said as he dropped to his hands and knees.

Behind them, one of the thugs shouted as he spotted them. Indy started to follow Suzie, who had disappeared down the hole, but

Archie slipped in front of him. “Yeah, you go next,” Indy said, glancing worriedly over his shoulder. “But hurry, man, hurry.”

Finally, he crawled into the hole, holding the leather bag with the sphere tightly against his chest. The walls rubbed against his shoulders. The ground angled upward. If it got any tighter, he was in trouble. But he forced himself to keep inching ahead through the thick, dank darkness.

He heard muted cries from the Tong Gang, then a voice that sounded as if it came from right behind him. “Archie, can you go any faster? They’re coming after us.”

“I am going fast as I can.” Archie kicked dirt onto Indy as he picked up his pace. Indy didn’t care. He just wanted to get out of this hole as fast as possible. The walls seemed to be closing in on him, the roof sloped, he could barely breathe. He pushed the leather bag ahead and moved it in an undulating fashion, pulling himself upward. His face was covered with sweat and dirt when he finally popped through the narrow passage and into a larger cavity filled with gray light. Smelly water puddled under his forearms and hands as he extracted himself from the hole and stood up.

“The sewer,” Archie said.

“I can smell it,” Indy answered.

“I hear them coming,” Suzie said, leaning over the hole, and still holding onto the lantern he’d given her.

Indy grinned. “Let them.”

He heard the first one huffing as he reached the sewer entrance. The thug clawed his way up, gun in hand, but Indy was ready for him, kicked the gun away, then delivered a second kick to the thug’s jaw. He slid back into the hole, unconscious.

“Sorry about that, but you shouldn’t point guns at people.” Indy swept up the snub-nosed six-shooter, stuck it into his jacket.

Now the other gangsters, trapped below their unconscious buddy, shouted and cursed and futilely pushed at the body blocking their way.

Indy and Suzie rushed away, leaving the Tong to their own devices. As they trudged through the sewer toward a distant gray light, Indy wondered if the excitement was over for the night. Probably not, he decided. He should’ve known that answering Archie Tan’s distress call wasn’t going to be an easy task. Even though he’d succeeded in recovering the jade sphere, he still needed to avoid the

Tong gang and the Nazis. He also needed to protect Archie, who could easily be killed in revenge by either outfit.

He slowed, listening hard. He heard a chattering sound close by his head. It sounded alive. He stopped, lit a match, and saw a pack of rats scurrying along a shoulder-high ledge. One of them, nearly the size of a cat, leaped onto his shoulder. He grabbed it by the tail and hurled it into the pack. Several more leaped at him.

"Run!" he shouted, but Suzie and Archie had already slipped past him and raced ahead into the dim gray light, through the fetid stink, water splashing as they ran. Indy shook off the screeching rats, kicked others to the side, and lurched after his friends.

They rushed ahead, turned a corner, and stopped. Archie pointed to a steel ladder attached to the wall and a manhole cover above it. "This is where I was hiding, not in the boat, like they thought," Archie said.

"Looks good to me, especially after those rats." Indy vaulted up the ladder, pushed on it with one hand, held the leather bag in the other. With an effort, he slid the cover aside, and carefully raised his head. He expected to see a street or alley in Chinatown. Instead, it looked like he was crawling into a darkened storage closet cluttered with boxes.

A door stood partially open and he pushed through it and into a factory. The place looked abandoned, with dust covering the machinery and a conveyor belt. Archie, then Suzie appeared next to him.

Suzie held up the lantern. "I know where we are. It's the fireworks factory."

"Closed for the New Year," Indy said.

"Closed for a long time," Archie responded.

Indy quickly realized the doors and windows were boarded up. "How do we get out, Archie?"

"I show you."

He started to follow Archie toward the front when Indy heard voices coming from the storage closet. "Turn off the lantern," Indy hissed, and they ducked behind the conveyor belt.

"Too late, Jones. We already saw your light."

He recognized Blind Duck's voice and realized the Tong chief had more than one life.

“Give me the jade sphere right now and I’ll let you go. That’s a promise,” Blind Duck called out, moving into the factory with several of his cohorts.

“I don’t think I trust your promises,” Indy shouted back. “You don’t seem to keep them.”

A hail of bullets met his response. Indy and Suzie ran alongside the conveyor belt, staying low, bodies hunched over, shoes squeaking. Indy returned the fire, but the gun jammed after two shots. Bullets zipped by their heads, pinged off the walls. Their situation was desperate and Indy was about to give up in order to save Suzie when fireworks started exploding behind them. A rocket whistled through the air and struck another container of fireworks, setting it off. Within seconds, a full-scale pyrotechnic battle was underway as smaller fireworks set off larger ones launching rockets here and there. Arms protecting their heads, the thugs shouted and raced for cover, but most of the boxes contained fireworks that soon started exploding in their faces.

“Back out to the sewer,” Archie said. “Too dangerous here.”

Oh, really, Indy thought as a rocket shot inches over his head. They crawled forward under the fireworks, moving closer and closer to the storage closet. They reached the door to find Blind Duck waiting for them. He aimed his gun at Indy’s chest. “Now you die!”

“Wait. Don’t you want to know where I hid the jade sphere? You’ll never guess where I put it.”

He looked down at Indy’s hands and just then, Indy swung the leather bag containing the sphere into his face. Blind Duck stumbled back and fell over Suzie, who had dropped on her hands and knees behind him.

“Quick, let’s get out of here!” Indy said. Suzie and Archie climbed down the ladder to the sewer and just as Indy ducked his head below the floor a rocket slammed into the storage closet, exploding and setting off more fireworks and illuminating the sewer in a rainbow of colors.

“Let’s see how he does after that one,” Indy said.

They hurried down the sewer and after a couple of minutes reached another ladder leading up to a manhole. “Let’s try this one. Gotta be better than the last one.”

“Let me go first this time,” Archie said.

Indy didn’t see any reason he shouldn’t. “Be my guest.”

Archie climbed out, and Indy started to follow when Suzie suddenly shouted for help. Indy handed the leather satchel up to Archie and dropped back into the tunnel. One of the Tong gang, a wild expression on his face, his hair and clothing singed, rushed at him with a club. Indy pushed Suzie to the ground, then flipped the attacker over his shoulder. But the thug, surprisingly, landed on his feet and came at Indy again. He swung the club at his head, Indy ducked and grabbed his arm and flung him onto his back. He grabbed for the club and for moments, they struggled over it, twisting and turning, grunting and heaving and breathing hard. This Tong thug was strong, Indy thought, somehow mustered the strength and the resolve to yank hard on the club, then reversed the pressure and slammed it against the thug's jaw. He released the club, stumbled back, and collapsed. Indy pointed at the fallen gang member. "You stay here, don't move, or I'll crush your skull like a walnut shell."

He motioned for Suzie to climb the ladder, while he kept an eye on his Tong opponent, sprawled in the dirt.

"Indy, where's Archie? He's not up here!"

"Oh, great."

The thug sat up, lunged for Indy's legs, but Indy was ready and booted him in the chest, knocking him back down. "I said, stay there."

He quickly climbed out through the manhole and saw that he was near the entrance to Chinatown. Drunken revelers, left over from the celebration, pointed and backed away. He scanned the thinning crowd. No sign of Archie. "Okay, where is he?"

He realized it was his own fault. He should've climbed out first and let Archie hand him the leather bag, instead of the other way around. But then again, the thug who attacked him in the tunnel might easily have killed Archie and Suzie while he waited for them.

"Hey, Suzie!" a tall, slender teenage boy called out to her. "What are you doing in the sewer with that man?"

"Setting off fireworks with him and my grandpa," Suzie quipped.

"I heard them. I just saw your grandpa with some men. I think they were speaking German."

"Where?" Indy and Suzie spoke simultaneously.

"There they are now! Getting on that cable car."

6
THE STAFF OF MOSES

Indy caught a glimpse of Archie Tan half a block away, then he disappeared inside the cable car. Several trench coats followed closely behind. Indy started toward the car, but realized it was moving, picking up speed. He rushed toward it, leaped, and grabbed onto the back railing. He hung on, riding on the outside of the car.

Suzie chased after him, but couldn't catch up. "Be careful, Indy!" she shouted, waving her hands.

Two of the trench coats stepped out on the rear platform and conversed in German. More Gestapo, he thought. One of the men said he saw someone jumping onto a car, but the other one didn't believe it, and told him he was imagining things. *"Niemand ist aus hier."* No one is out here.

"Wanna bet!" Indy popped up and slugged the Nazi, knocking him back into the car.

His partner lunged, Indy ducked, grabbed him by the collar, and yanked him over the railing. With a yelp, he tumbled to the street. Indy leaped over the rail, shouts filling the car behind him, scrambled onto the roof and hurried forward. He hoped the Nazis would go out the rear and he could enter through the front, find Archie and the jade sphere, and escape.

But his pounding feet alerted the foes and just before he reached the front of the car, a couple of Gestapo agents bounded onto the roof. He quickly lowered himself over the side and swung through the front door.

"Hello, Jonesy! Thanks for dropping in." A tall muscular blond smiled, then slammed his fist into Indy's jaw.

"Long time no see, Magnus," Indy replied, stars exploding inside his head, then returned the favor, a left to the German's cheek. "I thought you would be busy with your exhibition this evening."

"Never too busy when there's another artifact to collect. Now get off this car before I throw you off."

"You two sit down or I'm throwing both of you off," growled the trolley driver.

Magnus Völler turned, jerked the man from his seat and knocked him out with a single blow. Indy took advantage of the distraction, scanned the seats, spotted Archie, then leaped back onto the roof. He started to reach for his whip, but one of Völler's men tackled him. They rolled over, dangerously close to the edge of the roof. Indy kicked the man away and another Gestapo agent tripped over him. He leaped to his feet, but a third Nazi slammed a fist into his gut. Indy bent over, then landed an uppercut to the man's jaw. He stumbled back and, screaming, plunged over the side of the speeding cable car.

Völler climbed onto the roof, a revolver in his hand, but stumbled as the cable car hurtled downhill toward the bay, driverless, out of control, moving too fast. One of his men grabbed Indy by the ankle, yanking his feet out from under him. He crashed to the roof, Völler's shot whistling over his head.

"Time to go!" Indy kicked free of the Gestapo agent, then swung his legs through an open window and into the car.

Archie Tan was crumpled in a seat, gagged, hands tied to his feet. For the first time since he'd encountered him in the lifeboat, Indy got a good look at Archie. He wore a rumpled dirt-smeared white suit, a crushed Panama hat, and an eye patch. "That's no way to travel, Archie."

Indy pulled out a knife and quickly cut through the ropes, then tore the gag away. "Indy, I'm sorry. They got me."

"Where's the jade sphere?"

"They took it from me. But it's here somewhere."

The cable car careened wildly downhill, heading for disaster. Something fell from an overhead rack right into Archie's lap. "Here it is!"

"I'll take it. Now let's get out of here before we crash."

They raced to the rear platform. Indy grabbed Archie's arm. "Ready?"

"For what?"

"To jump!"

"No!"

"Yes, it's time."

"We're going too fast."

"No choice, Archie."

Indy spotted two men lugging a mattress uphill along the sidewalk. He grabbed Archie's arm, they jumped and landed squarely on the mattress, knocking it out of the grasp of the two men. The mattress skidded down the sidewalk, careened into a tree, and catapulted Indy and Archie into a hedge.

Indy helped Archie to his feet. "That wasn't so bad. Hey, where did it go? Where is it?"

He spotted the leather sack rolling down the sidewalk and hurried after it. The sphere hit a stone and the leather bag bounded right into the hands of Magnus Völler, who looked as if he'd landed on a pile of garbage.

Völler whipped up his gun and Indy knew his former fellow student and competitor wasn't about to show mercy. The trigger clicked, empty.

"Too bad, Magnus." Indy reached into his jacket and pulled out the snub-nosed revolver he'd recovered from the sewer, the one that jammed on him in the fireworks factory. "You want to try this one? No, I don't think so. Now hand it over."

"You won't shoot me in cold blood," Völler sneered.

"You're right about that." Before Völler could react, Indy slammed the butt of the gun against his skull. The hulking German tottered over and Indy snagged the leather bag from his grasp.

"You got it, Indy!" Archie whooped with delight and triumph. "Congratulations! Now the adventure can begin."

"What? It hasn't started?"

"We've got to go to the airport right away." Archie hailed a taxi, but it kept going. "We've got to get to Panama."

“Why?”

“Because that’s what Professor Kingston would want. I’ve held off for years, but now it’s time.”

A Dodge pickup truck pulled to the side of the street. “Grandpa, Indy! Am I too late?”

“Just a bit,” Indy said.

“Suzie! What’re you doing with my truck?”

“Trying to save you.”

“Well, we do need a ride.” They scrambled into the pickup and Archie directed her to the airport.

Indy glanced back and saw Völler sitting up, rubbing his head. Then they took a sharp turn, too fast, and the truck nearly lifted up on two wheels. “How long have you been driving, Suzie?”

“I just started.”

“Never would’ve guessed.”

“All part of the adventure, Indy,” Archie laughed and slapped Indy on the back.

Indy was beginning to have second thoughts about an adventure with Archie. “I don’t know about Panama, Archie. I really should get back to the college.”

“Oh, your students will understand. You are following in the footsteps of the great Professor Kingston. You can send a telegram to your office at the airport. Emergency fieldwork.”

“My students might understand, but I don’t know about my department head. He tends to be a bit envious of my fieldwork.”

“Just tell him it’s your time to go after the powerful biblical artifact that Professor Kingston died looking for, and it must be kept out of the hands of the Nazis.”

“The Staff of Moses?”

“The very one.”

Indy felt the curving shape of the sphere through the leather pouch. “But what’s that got to do with this jade sphere?”

“Professor Kingston entrusted it to me. Every couple of years he would visit and take the sphere to Central America. I never knew what he did with it until his last trip when he left me a letter explaining how I was supposed to contact you in the event of his death or disappearance.”

“You took your time. He’s been gone six years.”

Archie tugged on the lapels of his tattered coat. “Sorry. I was busy. Besides, I thought if I gave it to you that would really mean he was dead. I kept hoping he would turn up one day. But when that Nazi brute came after the jade sphere, I knew it was time.”

“What am I supposed to do with it, play Mayan basketball?”

“You take it to the Temple of the Cosmos. Kingston gave me directions in his letter, along with maps and charts. There’s also a letter for you. It’s in a locker at the airport. I also added emergency supplies and cash.”

“Very convenient,” Indy said. Apparently, Archie had expected trouble eventually and prepared for it.

As they motored on, Archie directed Suzie to turn here and there and tried to correct her driving. Indy mulled over everything he’d just been told. He’d always wondered why Kingston had put off revealing the existence of the hidden pyramid and the jade sphere. In the archaeological world, its existence was rumored, but never verified. Indy, for his part, had abided by his professor’s wishes, even after his disappearance.

But how was a Mayan pyramid connected to an artifact dating back to ancient Egypt and the Old Testament? The Staff of Moses, as he recalled, was a miraculous stick that could draw water from a rock or divide the Red Sea into two halves. Somehow the jade sphere held the answer, he thought.

When they arrived at the airport, Archie sent Suzie on her way in spite of her protests. He and Indy went inside the airport, to a row of metal lockers, where Archie recovered a backpack. Then he handed Indy an envelope, and proceeded to the ticket counter. Indy opened the letter, noting it was dated June 9, 1933, more than six years ago.

Dear Indy,

If you’ve found this letter, it means that I did not succeed in my attempt to locate the Staff of Moses. It means that something happened to me and I am no longer capable of contacting you in person. I am writing to beseech you to take up the quest, to follow my trail and continue the search for this sacred artifact.

By now, my loyal friend, Archie Tan, has given you the jade sphere, which he has kept hidden for me. I’ve asked him to accompany you to Central America and make arrangements for

you to travel into the Darién Jungle for a return visit to the Temple of the Cosmos.

When you get there and enter the planetarium within the pyramid, you'll find out why I have kept the existence of this fabulous pyramid a secret. Remember, you must have the jade sphere with you, or your trip will be for naught.

Keep in mind that your journey to Panama is only the first step in locating the Staff of Moses. For security reasons, I am unable to provide more information in this letter. Rather, you must pursue my clues each step of the way. In essence, you must prove your worthiness, or you'll never find the Staff of Moses.

At the very least, the staff is a powerful symbol of righteousness that must not fall into the wrong hands. However, I am convinced that it is much more than that. I'm sorry for the inconvenience, Indy, but this matter is of utter importance. You are now embarking on a highly secretive mission. If you fail and the staff ends up in the hands of dark forces, the consequences for the future of the world will be most grim.

I hope this letter never reaches you. But in the event that it does, good luck!

Your friend and colleague,
Charles Kingston

He folded the letter and put it away as Archie returned. "We're in luck, Indy. We take flight to Los Angeles in one hour. We lay over three hours, and at sunrise we fly to Panama."

"Bleary eyed, no doubt."

"Yes, but alive. We sleep on the plane." His voice faded as he stared over Indy's shoulder. "Don't look behind you. We need to go directly to the gate and board quickly as possible."

"Nazis?"

Archie shook his head as they started walking. "A spy for the Tong gang. You disappointed them. Their leader wanted to steal the jade sphere and sell it to the Nazis."

"Blind Duck, I met him. Didn't care for him. I'm funny that way about anyone who points a gun at me."

"We did much business in the past. He was honorable, most of the time. Other times, not so much."

“I thought he was protecting you.”

“So he said. But he only wanted the jade sphere.”

“Nice friends, these Tong fellows.”

“Fortunately, I have other friends, as well,” Archie said. “You’re one of them.”

They reached the gate and boarded their plane. After reading the note, Indy was ready to take up Kingston’s quest, and fight off the Nazis… again, if that’s what it took. As soon as they arrived in Los Angeles, he would send Marcus Brody a telegram and ask him to smooth things over for him in the archaeology department. He needed an immediate sabbatical. Another one. As long as he succeeded, he could survive any academic difficulties. If he failed, that was another matter. But in that case, he probably wouldn’t be around any longer, anyhow.

Ready or not, he thought, the quest was on.

Central America

The Maya built observatories in many of their cities, and aligned their important buildings with the movements of celestial bodies. The three temples at Uaxactún mark the Sun's rising position at summer solstice, the two equinoxes and winter solstice. The Caracol at Chichén Itzá is aligned with the appearance of Pleiades and Venus. Impressive, yes. Yet, Kingston always believed there was an undiscovered temple that would outshine all the others.

—from a lecture by Dr. Indiana Jones, Fall, 1938

7
INTO THE JUNGLE

All Indy could see out the window of the twin-engine cargo plane was mile and mile of endless forest, but the pilot was dipping low, just a couple hundred feet above the canopy, then a hundred feet, and still descending. Rory, a Panamanian of Dutch and Spanish descent, wore a leather cap and goggles above his handlebar mustache. Indy and Archie had quickly learned that Rory took great joy in frightening his passengers with acrobatic moves, such as making loops just above the treetops.

Indy moved forward and tapped him on the shoulder. “What’s going on now?” he shouted over the roar of the engine

“Out of gas!” he yelled above the roar of the engine. “Sit down and get ready!”

“For what?” Indy yelled back.

A moment later, a grass landing strip appeared, carved out of the jungle. The pilot laughed as the plane touched down and taxied to a stop fifty feet short of the jungle. “Just kidding. Good luck, *muchachos*.”

“Thank you for the scary flight, Rory,” Archie Tan said, tapping his chest as he and Indy got out. “Will someone drive us to town?”

“Mr. Tan, in Cana you have to pick yourself up. You are at the most remote town in all of Panama. There are no roads here, only jungle and river.”

“We’re roughing it from here, Archie,” Indy said.

“But you won’t be lonely. There are lots of animals to keep you company, and a few people who act like animals.” The pilot laughed again.

“You come with us?” Archie asked as he and Indy took out their backpacks.

“No, I’m going right back to the capital. However, I’ll be here again tomorrow afternoon with supplies for the general store. If you’ve decided you’ve had enough of Cana and the jungle, I can take you out. Otherwise, I come back once a week. Just leave your name with the bartender.”

“Which bar, which tender?” Archie asked.

“Oh, there’s only one of each now. It’s a small town, getting smaller, too, as the jungle gets bigger.”

“What about transportation into the jungle?” Indy asked.

“There’s a bush pilot in Cana with a seaplane, an American who worked on the canal.”

“Good, that’ll save time,” Indy said.

“He’s a drunk, though. So he might not be available, if you know what I mean. The alternative is to take a steamer down the river. It might be safer,” Rory advised.

With that, he taxied to the end of the runway, turned the plane in the opposite direction, and picked up speed. Seconds later, he was airborne and streaking into the distance. By the time they found the trail to town, they could barely hear the engine.

“I hope this wasn’t a mistake,” Archie said.

Indy looked back at the airstrip and spotted a jaguar ambling down the center of the grass strip. “No, I don’t think so.”

“You’re right,” Archie nodded. “We didn’t have any choice. We’re doing it for Professor Kingston, or in his memory. Or something.” He sounded as if he were trying to convince himself that he should be here, Indy thought, but he wasn’t doing a very good job.

The jungle was thick and high, verdant and humid. The green world seemed to close in around them the farther they moved from the landing strip. Howler monkeys chattered in the canopy. A blue and yellow macaw soared overhead and a pair of toucans, their beaks

posing as bananas, stared down at them. Indy kept an eye on the branches overhead for snakes, but was relieved that he didn't see any dangling serpents.

Archie adjusted his backpack, tugged on the brim of his hat, wiped the sweat from his forehead. It's all very exotic, but it'll be nice to get to town."

Indy froze, held up a hand. "Do you hear that?"

The monkeys and birds were silent now and within that silence, he heard a deep rumbling, like distant thunder, moving their way. Indy dropped to one knee and placed a hand on the ground. The earth vibrated under his fingers.

"Maybe it's a truck coming to get us," Archie suggested.

"I don't think so."

The rumbling grew louder as the earth shook. "What is it?" Archie shouted.

Indy took one look, grabbed Archie's arm and lunged into the jungle. They'd no sooner left the trail when a drove of peccary, dozens of them, thundered by.

"Oh, it was just some cute little pigs," Archie said, brushing himself off as he stepped back onto the trail.

"Not so cute," Indy replied. "They would've gored us with their horns, stomped all over us, then chewed off our faces. They're vicious little bastards."

"I can't wait to get to town," Archie said. "I can deal better with two legged bastards."

* * *

Maggie O'Malley studied her cards, then laid down her bet. Two of the men dropped out. The other one met her bet and let her know that he didn't care for her winning ways.

"We don't get many ladies playing poker with us in this place, but I'll take your money and whatever else you've got to offer." The grizzled gold prospector met her bet and raised it. He grinned across the table, revealing a gaping hole where his front teeth should be.

"I'll just settle for your bloody money, ya miserable git," Maggie answered, then raised the bet again. "If I were you, I'd quit now while you've got something left. And if you ever find any gold in the

streams, you might consider saving some for a bloody dentist so he can make you a few new teeth."

The prospector scowled at her from behind his greasy cards, then leaned over and spat on the sawdust-covered floor. The patrons not only spit but urinated on the sawdust. The proprietor swept it up and replaced it daily, treating his customers like horses, his bar like a stable, Maggie thought.

"She's very funny, that one," Missing Teeth muttered.

"She's also very good," a man chimed in from the bar.

Maggie glanced over at him. An American, fairly good looking with all his teeth and a whip on his hip. "Another country heard from. Why don't you join us, *hombre*? We could use some fresh blood in this game."

The American and an older Chinese man with an eye patch had walked into the bar a few minutes ago. "I might've used up my luck already escaping some wild pigs out on the trail."

She knew about the peccary problem and no one laughed. The pigs were no joke, especially when they ran in a pack right through town.

"Let's finish this hand," Missing Teeth complained. "I call your bluff, lady."

Maggie started to lay down cards, but one of them slipped to the floor next to her camera bag. She leaned over, scooped it up, then turned up her hand. "Aces and eights, partner."

Missing Teeth threw his cards on the table and bolted to his feet. "Did you see that! The *puta* is cheating."

Maggie leaped to her feet. "I am *not* cheating! You're a lousy loser, and stop calling me names."

She grabbed her bag, expecting trouble, just as Whip Guy entered the fray. "I saw the whole thing. She dropped her card and picked it up. She's not cheating. So apologize to the lady."

"Hell no! I'm taking my money back. I don't play with cheats." With that, he upended the table, and threw a punch at Whip Guy, who pulled his head back and caught Missing Teeth by the wrist. Then the other players leaped in and pulled Whip Guy away.

Missing Teeth stalked up to her. You're not cheating me and getting away with it."

He lunged for her bag, but she clubbed him on the back of the head with a leaded pipe. He collapsed to the floor, but someone else

rushed toward her. She spun around and struck Whip Guy on the side of the head.

"I was just coming over to…" He dropped to his knees and fell forward into the sawdust.

"Oops," she murmured. "Sorry about that."

* * *

Sunlight slipped into her room through the cracks in the walls, the only indication that it was morning. The shabby room didn't have any windows, probably a good thing since there wasn't any paint on the wood plank walls. The mattress was thin, not particularly clean, and smelled, and the springs poked into her back all night. She would've been happier sleeping in her hammock between a couple of trees. Maggie was ready to get out of this boarding house and this one-horse, one-road-to-nowhere town, especially after her poker game last night.

She picked up her backpack with her camera gear inside, slung it over her shoulder and walked into the hallway. She descended the creaky stairs, stepped out into the morning, and headed for the dock. She passed the bar where a few minutes ago she'd eaten breakfast—an order of runny scrambled eggs, bread and coffee. Hardly the stuff of gracious dining, but all things considered, she probably should consider herself fortunate to find breakfast at all. Fortunately, the bar remained empty of gamblers and rummies. She didn't need any confrontations at this hour.

Actually, there was one man she wouldn't mind seeing again, the friendly guy that she'd KO'd, at least to apologize to him. Then again, she didn't need any distractions and he looked to her like a major one in the making. Best to get on her way. She had work to do.

As she walked the quarter mile to the river, she thought about how far she'd come since her childhood in Dublin. The only girl among six children, Margaret Grace O'Malley learned how to hold her own with the boys. As she grew up, she was determined to escape a dead-end life marooned in poverty. At fifteen, she took a job as an *au pair* for an American diplomat and ended up traveling the globe with the ambassador and his family.

She still remembered the day she was given a Kodak Brownie camera to record the activities of her young charges. Besides taking

photos of the children, she began documenting the people and places they visited. Encouraged by the ambassador and his wife, Maggie built a portfolio of her photojournalistic work that was surprisingly accomplished. She captured the everyday life in Egypt, Africa, and the Far East. In 1930, after the family moved back to the States, the ambassador made some introductions and the twenty-five-year-old photojournalist landed an internship in New York.

Over the next few years, she made a name for herself as a worldly and fearless photographer. In 1936, she became one of the first photojournalists to cover the Spanish Civil War. During that time, she got a close look at the Third Reich in action, and made up her mind about Nazis. When the opportunity to do something about it came her way, she decided to act.

Now, she was about to head down river to photograph the reclusive Simar before their way of life was swallowed by modern civilization. She was also following up on recent visits to the jungle by Nazis. The steamer awaited her arrival, but the captain was talking with a couple of men. When the captain motioned toward her, they turned and she recognized Whip Guy and Eye Patch. She had the feeling they were going to be trouble. They were probably trying to outbid her for the use of the steamer. And what was their connection, if any, with the Nazis?

* * *

The tramp steamer was tied to the dock and ready to head down the river, but it was already booked. Disappointed, Indy turned to the bearded boat pilot. “Are you sure there’re no other boats?”

It was hard to believe that thousands of people used to live in this remote jungle town, but that was fifty years ago during the gold rush. Now the boom was a faint memory and the jungle quickly and quietly was reclaiming the mines and creeping up on the edges of the town.

The captain tugged at the brim of his hat, then rubbed his neck. “There is a grouchy old miner who rents out his dugout, but someone put sawdust in the gas tank of his motor last week.”

“I think I know where they got the sawdust,” Indy said, recalling his misadventure the night before.

When they’d arrived, the bartender had advised them that the bush pilot was in no condition to fly anywhere anytime soon. He’d

pointed to the corner of the bar where a man had been passed out, cheek glued to a table. Indy had been about to rouse him when the ruckus broke out that quickly ended his evening.

Now it looked as if they might be stuck in Cana for days, a possibility that didn't appeal to him in the least. His introduction to the town had consisted of fleeing stampeding pigs, getting walloped by a poker-playing Irish woman, and now losing the one chance to leave.

"We could always fly back to the capital for a few days," Archie Tan suggested. "I have friends there. I can make good business. There are always interesting things coming into Panama."

Archie was dressed for the city, not for days on the river, and Indy felt bad for him. He was at home in San Francisco and even Panama City, but small towns like Cana and excursions into the jungle didn't appeal to him.

"If I go back to Panama City, I might as well go back to Barnett and cancel my sabbatical," Indy said. "I'm here, so one way or another I'm going to find a way to get down that river and follow Kingston's map to the pyramid."

The steamer pilot, a French-born Panamanian named Jacques, waved a hand downriver. "Never seen any pyramids, just jungle. Bad jungle."

"Thanks for the encouragement." Then Indy saw her, the Irish woman from last night. She was approaching the dock, carrying the same bag she'd had last night, the one with the lead pipe and who knows what else inside.

"Don't tell me that's who hired you!"

"She's a photographer for National Geographic," the pilot said, then proudly added: "I've seen that magazine."

Indy turned to her as she sauntered up. "First you clobber me over the head, then you steal my boat out from underneath me."

"It's not your boat. I hired it ahead of you," the woman said with a smile. "You'll just have to wait your turn." She started to board the steamer, then stopped. "Sorry about what happened last night, by the way. I didn't mean to thump you."

"I'm sure there were others more deserving in that crowd."

"No doubt." She extended a hand. "Maggie O'Malley."

"Jones, Dr. Jones, Indiana Jones."

"Which is it?"

“Take your pick. This is my associate, Archie Tan of San Francisco.”

Maggie shook Archie’s hand, then turned her attention back to Indy. “How are you feeling this morning?”

He took off his hat, gingerly touched the side of his head. “It’s a little tender right there.”

She moved closer, took a look, then probed it with a finger.

“Ouch!” he yelped.

“Sorry.”

“Maybe if you kiss it, it’ll get better faster,” Indy suggested.

“Oh, I don’t think that’ll help. You just need to take it easy for a couple of days. You should know that, Dr. Jones.”

“I’m not that kind of doctor, and I don’t like taking it easy, at least not in this place,” Indy answered.

Archie Tan stepped forward. “He’s an archaeologist, quite famous, too. We are on an important mission. That’s why we need the steamer very soon, like right now.”

She laughed. “So do I. I have an important mission, too, and I was here first.”

In spite of his first encounter with Maggie, he liked her spunk, and was astonished that she’d apparently come alone to this remote outpost. “So you’re taking pictures of the local wildlife for a magazine.”

“National Geographic. But not wildlife. I’m going to a Simar village. They’re a very interesting tribe, primitive, and they like it that way.”

“Sounds like fun. Girl photographer goes native.”

“Very funny. So what are you doing here, Jones, looking for the missing link?”

“Oh, we already found that last night at your poker table. We’re looking for a Mayan pyramid.”

She laughed. “And you say you’re an archaeologist. Try Mexico or Guatemala. The Mayan didn’t build any pyramids in southern Panama, or anywhere in Panama.”

“That’s what makes it interesting, one of the things, at least. There is such a pyramid.”

“Has anyone ever actually seen it, or is it a rumor among your colleagues?”

“I’ve seen it. I’ve been there. Actually, there are three pyramids, one large, two small.

She wasn’t laughing now. “You know, maybe we can work out a deal.”

“What kind of deal?”

“You come to the Simar village with me, and I’ll go with you to visit this pyramid, as long as I can photograph it, and get exclusive rights to all my photos.”

Before Indy could respond, Archie stepped forward. “That is excellent idea. Much better than waiting here for many days. Wouldn’t you agree, Indy? I hope so.”

“It would seem that way.” He turned to Maggie. “You have to understand that it won’t be an easy jaunt after we leave the boat. The Darién Jungle is unforgiving.”

“I can handle deprivation and I can deal with danger, Dr. Jones. It sounds like a wonderful opportunity with lots of potential for a photojournalist.”

“Yeah, I suppose. However, you would have to agree not to publish any of the photographs until it’s time to reveal the discovery to the world.”

“How long will that be?”

“Can’t say. We’re not the only ones who would like to find this pyramid.”

“Interesting. We can talk about it later.”

Indy smiled. “I hope we can get along.”

“Just don’t call me a bloody girl photographer again and we’ll get along quite fine. I promise not to complain. I’m not afraid of getting wet or dirty, or sleeping in a hammock.”

He noticed Archie frowning. A moment ago he was impatient to leave, now he looked hesitant. “What’s wrong?”

“Could we talk in private one minute?”

They walked over to the far side of the dock, while Maggie climbed aboard with the captain. “Do you trust her?” Archie asked. “She has a German accent.”

“That’s not a German accent. She’s Irish.”

“That’s different, I suppose. Lots of Americans cannot tell Chinese from other Asians. Me, I have same problem with Europeans.”

“Maybe you need to take a trip to Europe after this jungle journey. Are we ready?”

Archie looked at the steamer, cleared his throat. “Indy, one more thing. I think I am going to fly back with Captain Rory. He comes back today with supplies for the store.”

“Somehow, I’m not surprised.”

“Panama City is more to my liking than the jungle. I did my part for Professor Kingston, and it looks like you are now in good company, if you know what I mean.”

“I get it.”

The steamer’s horn blew and then Jacques called out: “All aboard that’s coming aboard, and best come along now or wave good-bye.”

Indy slapped Archie on the back. “You’ve done fine, Archie. Enjoy yourself in Panama City. I’ll let you know what happens.”

“Good luck, and stay alive.”

“I’ll try,” he said, then hurried across the dock and up the gangplank to the steamer. Maggie was nowhere in sight. What if she *was* working for the Germans? If that were the case, he would find out soon enough.

8
UP THE RIVER

As they rounded a bend a quarter of a mile from the dock, Indy spotted another docked steamer. “Hey, Jacques, you said there weren’t any other streamers. What’s that?”

“It doesn’t count. I don’t get along with that man. He’s no good, a cheat. I don’t tell anyone about his business.”

“Thanks a lot. I suppose *someone* else would’ve told me about it, if we’d stayed,” Indy said.

“I’m sure that’s true. He has his corrupt friends in Cana, like the one who put sawdust in the dugout motor. But don’t act so disappointed, my friend. You’re on your way and traveling with a beautiful, mysterious woman. What more can you ask for?”

How mysterious? he wondered. “I haven’t seen her since we left.”

“She went below, probably taking a nap.”

“I thought we just got up,” Indy muttered.

“Did someone say I’m taking a nap?”

Maggie stood on the deck, hands on hips. She wore a revealing bathing suit with a towel draped over her shoulder. Indy couldn’t take his eyes off her. A striking goddess, he thought. Feminine, curvaceous, yet strong and defiant, all wrapped in an aura of mystery, a combination that left him mute with wonder.

After a few moments of unabashed ogling, he managed to come to his senses. It was as if she'd smacked him over the head again, this time with a different weapon, one that was equally effective in disabling him.

"Going for a swim already?" he managed to say.

"Don't be silly, Indy. What would I do, hang from a rope, like bait for the caimans and piranhas? No, I'm just going to sunbathe. After all, we have two days before we reach the village."

With that, she walked toward the bow, spread out the towel and rolled over on her belly, her beautiful back exposed to the sky. She crossed her arms and rested her head on her forearms. Two days, Indy thought. Maybe this wasn't going to be such a rugged trip after all. At least, not for a while.

"Enjoying the pleasures of the moment, Dr. Jones?"

He'd almost forgotten that he was standing on the bridge with the pilot. "Yes, I think so, Jacques. And you can drop the Dr. Jones. It's Indy."

"While we're enjoying the view, let me remind you about where we are and what we are headed into."

"I'm all ears."

Jacques laughed. "Good. For a time there, I thought you were all eyes. But I can't blame you."

Jacques began by explaining that he had arrived in the jungle when he was fourteen years old. "I came with my father, who was a prospector. He found gold, then decided to use his newfound money to start a transportation business on the river. He bought four steamers; this one and the one we passed are the survivors. I took over for him when he died of a snake bite."

"What kind of snakes are out here?"

"Every kind you can imagine, Indy. But watch out for the coral snake, fer-de-lance, and bushmaster. Those guys are the deadliest of them all."

Just the thought of encountering any kind of snake, much less the deadly three he just mentioned, brought a swell of bile up Indy's throat. "Have you seen them yourself?"

"Of course. Just last week, when I was fishing, a fer-de-lance dropped from a tree limb right into my little dugout. I was lucky. I scooped it up with the paddle and tossed it into the river before it could attack."

“You didn’t kill it?”

“The natives say if you kill a snake, three more will come back for you. It’s just a story, but I’m not taking any chances.”

“I’ll remember that one.”

Jacques went on to say that he’d led hundreds of trips into the Darién, and probably knew it as well as anyone. He was full of stories and tidbits of history about the jungle, complete with dates. Indy held off telling Jacques that he’d traveled here several years ago. He preferred hearing Jacques’ stories, but was surprised that he didn’t know about the pyramids.

“The Darién Jungle had never taken kindly to outsiders. In 1699, nine hundred Scottish settlers tried to establish a settlement here. Indians or malaria killed most within months. In 1854, an American expedition got so lost and hungry while looking for a canal route that they ate their dead.”

Jacques explained that the Darién Gap, where they were headed, was sixty miles wide, a labyrinth of rivers, swamps, rainforest and mountains. Deadly snakes, caimans, crocodiles, biting insects, peccaries, jaguars and howler monkeys mixed with poachers, loggers, gold diggers, hostile Indians, and bandits.

“The lust for gold has always drawn people to this jungle,” he continued. “First, the Spanish conquistadors, and others later on, always looking to strike it rich. That lust for the color peaked at the end of the century when 16,000 settlers inhabited Cana.”

“Same thing happened in San Francisco,” Indy said, recalling Archie’s story about how his grandparents had immigrated during the great gold rush.

“But as you saw, Cana today is barely alive, just an outpost inhabited by pirates and smugglers and a few struggling prospectors. San Francisco was blessed with a much better location, California, on a great bay. Here, it’s just jungle and more jungle, and I think it will be this way until it is the last wild place left on Earth.”

After a few moments, he added: “As for your pyramids, yeah, of course I’ve heard about them. It’s a legend whispered by the guaqueros. Grave robbers are always looking for a palace of gold. A pipe dream. Nothing more. But tell that to the Nazis.”

“You’ve seen Nazis here?” Indy asked.

“They’ve come here in the last few months, just like you, looking for pyramids. At first, I thought you were one of them.”

“Not hardly.” Indy stretched his arms. “Think I’ll take a stroll. Thanks for the stories.”

He walked up to the bow, leaned over the railing, and watched the jungle pass by as the tramp steamer chugged along. So far he was enjoying the journey. On his first trip with Kingston, he’d flown in on a seaplane from another jungle outpost and landed on a tributary about a mile from the Temple of the Cosmos and the other two smaller pyramids.

He glanced over his shoulder at Maggie, who sat up and stretched her arms overhead. “Hope you don’t mind a little company.”

She smiled at him. “Do I have any choice? It’s a small boat. But not so bloody crowded as I expected. What happened to Archie Tan?”

“He decided he favored Panama City.”

“That’s understandable. It’s going to get challenging and uncomfortable, I suspect.”

“You almost sound like you’re looking forward to it. Have you ever spent time in the jungle?”

“I’ve put myself at risk in both natural jungles and human ones. I covered the Spanish Civil War in ’36. Needless to say, it wasn’t easy. I was nearly killed. My camera stopped the bullet.”

Indy saw an opportunity to ask a few questions about her thoughts on world politics. “The Germans were very interested in what was going on in Spain.”

“Of course. Hitler pressured General Franco to take Madrid and Guadalajara. Hitler saw it as a prequel to an eventual battle between fascism and communism, Germany and Russia.”

“You sound as if you had some dealings with the Germans.”

“Yes, too much,” she said in a soft voice, but didn’t offer any further comment.

Indy stared back at the jungle, satisfied. “We’re a long way from Europe, but there’s a possibility that some Nazis might also be looking for this pyramid.”

“Oh, really.” She sounded bored, unconcerned, but after a few moments, added: “You did say something about others interested in the pyramid, but you didn’t say there were Nazis on your trail, buster. What’s this about?”

He cleared his throat. “I did leave out a few details.” He told her what happened in San Francisco.

“Now you tell me. This is the last place one would expect to see Gestapo.” She sounded bored again. “Well, chances are they won’t find us here.”

“Yeah, it’s a big jungle.”

But Indy felt a tightening knot in his gut that he hadn’t seen the last of Magnus Völler and his buddies. He also felt something else equally disturbing. Maggie wasn’t telling him everything she knew.

* * *

The plane skidded to a stop on the jungle runway and the pilot cut the engine. Six men grabbed their gear and climbed out. Magnus Völler didn’t bother thanking the pilot. He’d paid him more than twice his normal fee in order to get him to leave immediately and not wait to load any cargo. Once the pilot had confirmed what Völler had been told by his Tong informant—that Jones and Tan were heading to Panama—nothing could stop him from getting here as quickly as possible.

Völler had made two previous trips to Cana in the last several months after a portion of Charles Kingston’s diary had come into his hands. It was all about Kingston’s search for the Staff of Moses, a sacred object that would make a powerful complement to the Third Reich’s growing collection of biblical artifacts. The *Fuhrer*, after all, was convinced that the accumulation of sacred artifacts from biblical times would cement the power of the Third Reich to rule the world.

Völler learned that the most important part of Kingston's diary was hidden in the Temple of the Cosmos. But his trips to the temple had proven useless. Reluctantly, he’d concluded that without the jade sphere he would never find the hidden diary that would provide details on how to locate the Staff of Moses.

His search for the sphere had led him to Archie Tan. He’d threatened Kingston’s friend to no avail and figured the loyal Chinaman would die with his secret. So he decided to trick Tan into giving up the location of the sphere by paying off the Tong Gang boss to ‘protect’ Tan. The results had been less than spectacular. The Tong boss had turned secretive about the sphere’s location and only wanted to negotiate details of the payment. Völler had insisted on proof that Blind Duck possessed the sphere before he would discuss the matter any further.

Somehow, Völler wasn't surprised when Indiana Jones showed up. Tan hadn't taken any chances and had called Jones as a backup. In spite of their differences, Völler and Jones also had a lot in common. Both had studied in Chicago under the famous pair of archaeologists, Kingston and Ravenwood. Völler had excelled at the University of Chicago until his falling out with Kingston that ironically involved the jade sphere. Besides that, Kingston and other professors mindlessly denigrated his best work because he speculated on ancient connections to the Germanic race. While Kingston and Ravenwood were obsessed with biblical history, Magnus Völler was single-mindedly focused on establishing the superiority of all things Aryan. Fortunately, his ideas had gotten a much warmer welcome when he returned to his undergraduate alma mater at University of Dresden and finished his studies.

Völler was about to join his men on the short trek to the village when one of them shouted, fired his weapon, and raced toward the jungle. A couple others loped after him. "What the hell are they doing, hunting jaguar? We don't have time for this."

"More likely peccary," the pilot said with a laugh. "The place is teaming with those pigs."

Then the late afternoon sun illuminated the catch of the day as two of his men walked out of the jungle dragging Archie Tan between them. "What do we have here?" Völler shouted. "We didn't have to look long for that one."

"What are you going to do to him?" The pilot nervously stroked his thick mustache. "I think he just wants to go back with me."

Völler pulled the revolver from his holster and aimed it at the pilot's forehead. "You leave now. No questions. Just go."

The pilot returned to his plane and quickly taxied away. The two Nazis tossed Archie Tan to the ground at Völler's feet. "So we meet again, Mr. Tan. Where is your whip-carrying partner?"

"I'm not telling you anything."

One of the men kicked Tan in the stomach.

"Not so rough with our friend." Völler pulled Archie to his feet, then slapped him with the back of his hand. "You will tell us everything." He grabbed Archie by the throat and squeezed as he lifted him with one hand.

Archie gagged, his face turned red. Völler lowered him to the ground, loosened his grip. "Where is he?"

“He’s gone. You won’t find him or the jade sphere here.”

“You’re coming with us. We’re going to look for Dr. Jones and you will keep us company.”

* * *

Maggie strolled through the Samir village, nodding and smiling to a young woman, who was busy painting an image onto a thin layer of bark that had been peeled from a tree. The bark art decorated their thatched homes and twice a year was bundled and sold downriver to traders.

The steamer had arrived at the village a couple of hours earlier, and Jacques had introduced them to the chief. Whenever she was among primitive people, she tried to be discreet about taking photos. Unlike many photographers who visited native villages, she remained sensitive to their way of life and didn’t act like she was taking family pictures. She would never think of lining people up to pose for group shots.

She paused and watched a mother teaching her daughter the intricacies of weaving. Both wore colorful wrap-around skirts and white blouses and were adorned with nose rings, as were many of the villagers. When the pair had gotten used to her presence, she began snapping photographs. After awhile, Maggie moved on to where a couple of teenage boys in loincloths were butchering a peccary and repeated the same process.

After the uneventful journey downriver, she was grateful to get out and move among the villagers with her Brownie Six-16, a new box camera on the market. It was small, making it easy for travel, and wasn’t as intrusive as the larger older cameras. The Samir were peaceful as long as you didn’t offend them by violating any of their rules, which basically meant respecting their culture and traditions.

She walked over to Indy, who was examining several bark paintings that hung on a line. “See anything you like?”

“No, but I see a couple that I don’t.” He pointed his index finger at a painting featuring two undulating snakes, and another that depicted a swastika. “This one makes me wary.”

“Dr. Jones, I hope you don’t think the Samir are Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. I really doubt that they know anything about Nazis.”

“Of course not. I’m well aware that the swastika is an ancient symbol used by many Native American tribes. It’s a symbol of the four winds that was absconded and exploited by Hitler. It just reminded me that a few real Nazis might be on our trail and the sooner we’re on our way the better.”

She ran her fingers over the painting, tracing the lines of the swastika. She considered telling him that Nazis had visited this village within the last few months but decided against it. He would want to know how she knew that, and she wasn’t ready to reveal that bit of information to him. “Look, I want to spend the night here. Shoot some more in the morning, then we can leave.”

“I figured as much. I’m going to take a walk in the jungle. I saw a path they use. I’ll see where it goes.”

“Probably to a garbage dump.”

“Good. That’s where we archaeologists find our most important information about cultures, if not their treasures.”

“Yeah, just don’t intrude,” Maggie said. “This culture is still functioning quite well on its own.”

“I’ll do my best not to steal any fish bones.”

She laughed as he walked away. She liked Indy, no doubt about it, and he seemed attracted to her. If they spent much more time together, the sparks would start flying. But she had the feeling he also attracted trouble like nails to a magnet. She would like a few days with the Samir for her photo essay, but it was more important to stick close to Jones. She was convinced he possessed something or knew something that the Nazis wanted. Her real assignment was finding out everything she could about what was going on here, and Jones was a means to that end.

* * *

Patience was not a virtue Indy possessed in any great measure, he thought as he followed the trail. Yes, the Simar village was picturesque, the natives friendly, or at least willing to allow them to look around and trade some trinkets for a couple of bark paintings. But he wasn’t a tourist. He was on a mission, an important one. He didn’t know if the Staff of Moses ever possessed the powers attributed to it, much less if it retained them. But he did know from experience that such relics existed. In that sense, he was a believer.

Apparently Kingston was convinced that the staff was imbued with power, and if that was the case, keeping it away from the Nazis was the most important thing he could do right now.

He came to a fork in the trail, and continued to the left. As he'd expected, it ended a couple hundred feet later in a mound of refuse. Since it was an active dump, and one of recent origin, he had no interest in it. But he was surprised to see that scattered among the remains of animal carcasses were some of the trade items they'd received. The Simar apparently had no use for silverware, a corkscrew, or a colander. He could imagine how they must have puzzled over that pot with all the holes, maybe filling it with water, watching it run out, and laughing.

There were also several books, all with black covers, in the heap. He stepped toward the heap, picked one up—a Bible. "Apparently, they don't favor the King James edition," he muttered. It suddenly occurred to him that if he dug deeper, he might find the missionary who'd brought the Bibles. He set it down on the edge of the pile, then backtracked to the fork in the trail.

He started to follow the other branch, but stopped when he saw a large bark painting hanging from a limb above the trail. The painting featured a vertical line with two cross lines, a blue crescent moon above the double cross, and a star below it. He studied it a moment, then continued on. He'd seen that symbol, but it took a moment for him to remember where. The trail ended in a clearing with a flat circular rock in the center. The same double-cross moon-star symbol was etched in the middle of the rock.

He sat down on the edge of the rock and took out the maps and drawings Kingston had left behind and studied them again. Next to a drawing of the river and the trail leading to the pyramids was the symbol, with a note beside it. *When you see the star/moon/double cross symbol, you know you're on the right trail.*

But this couldn't be the right place. They were still two days away by riverboat, and there was no mention of the Simar. As he re-folded the map, he found another note on the back that he'd overlooked:

Unless things have changed, the most reliable way to find the Temple of the Cosmos is by riverboat. Skilled seaplane pilots are in short supply in Cana. While following the river downstream, it's best to avoid the Indians. One tribe in particular is particularly

troublesome. They are called Simar and appear quite friendly. But don't be fooled by their welcoming demeanor. The chief of one particular village on the river apparently has sampled civilization and didn't like what he found. Be very careful around him and the warriors. I'm not suggesting that they will eat you, but it might be on their minds.

Indy bolted to his feet, folded up the drawing, stuffed it away. He needed to warn Maggie. As he headed for the trail he noticed movement in the surrounding jungle. An Indian with a painted body and a spear stepped into view, then another and another and another. Damn. Surrounded.

The warriors edged closer, waving their spears at him, shouting. Indy moved back toward the center of the opening and nearly tripped over the flat stone. He looked around frantically for an escape route, but didn't see any possibilities. Then he recognized the chief, who stepped forward, slammed his spear into the ground, and shouted at him.

The chief had spoken Spanish when they'd arrived, indicating that he'd had outside contact. No doubt he was the same fellow that Kingston had encountered. But now he was seething and mixed Spanish with his native tongue. He kept saying, *pierda sacrados*, something about a sacred stone.

Not good, not good at all. Within seconds, it seemed, the hint of menace from Kingston's letter had evolved into a full-fledged assault. To show the chief that he meant no harm, Indy carefully slipped off his pack, dropped it on the flat rock, and held up his hands. *"No guns, no pistolas."* He smiled and waved his hands. *"Soy un amigo."*

But that just angered the chief even more. He pulled his spear out of the ground and jabbed it at Indy. Suddenly, he realized that he was standing at a sacred place where rituals were held, probably where sacrifices were made. Of course, the *sacred stone*.

He scooped up his pack again just as Maggie burst into the circle, gasping for breath, pursued by more warriors. Now they were both captives, and he feared they were about to be sacrificed. "Indy, hello. Get away from that stone. Didn't you hear the chief? You're not supposed to be here in their sacred circle and definitely not on the stone."

She turned to the chief and spoke to him in fluent Spanish. Indy understood enough to realize that she was calling him an idiot, that he didn't know any better, and begged for the chief's forgiveness.

The chief spoke gruffly and motioned for them both to leave the circle, his gestures sharp, quick, unambiguous. Indy didn't waste any time following orders and Maggie was right behind him. "I thought that as an archaeologist you would have some respect and sensitivity for the traditional culture."

"That's anthropology. In my field, we tend to deal with dead cultures and their artifacts. We're careful diggers, but sometimes not always so careful with the local folks."

"That's obvious," she replied. Best thing to do is go right to the steamer and leave."

"Oops, sorry about that."

"It's okay. I got quite a nice selection of photos. I'd like to stay and take more, but that's out of the question now."

"Maybe on our way back…" Indy's words trailed off. He knew there was no coming back here.

"We need to give them something and go." Maggie spoke brusquely and picked up the pace.

"Yeah, just don't give them corkscrews, colanders, or Bibles."

"I wouldn't think of it. How about your whip?"

"I don't like that idea, either. They might put it to use. But I do have an extra knife."

"Good, and I've got candy for the kids."

When they reached the village, they found Jacques tied to a pole with a couple of men guarding him. "What did you do, Jones?" he bellowed, his face wet with perspiration, his eyes terrified, wide as plates. "I've never had trouble with these people."

Maggie conferred with the chief, who quickly ordered the boat pilot released. "They were holding you for trade with another tribe that likes to eat their captives," she said. "They don't want you to bring any more idiots here."

Jacques rubbed his arms, glared at Indy. "I'll remember that. I don't appreciate being tied up in my own rope. I traded it for a dozen bark paintings last year."

Awhile later, they were traveling down the river again. Jacques had already warned them that they'd soon be entering rough waters,

and they wouldn't be able to stop for the night until they reached a tributary where the water was calmer.

Indy stood near the stern with Maggie, taking in the scenery, trying to relax and enjoy the tranquil ride, while it lasted. He was keeping his distance from Jacques, who was still upset with him for almost getting them killed. Indy had tried talking to him, apologizing, but to no avail. Jacques's only comment was that he wished he'd taken Maggie, by herself, as originally planned.

For his part, Indy was feeling contrite and apologetic toward Maggie. "Sorry again about what happened back there. I usually handle myself better than that."

"I can just imagine," Maggie said. "Believe it or not, sometimes diplomacy works better than a whip and a gun."

"What! Are you implying that I might've gotten aggressive?" Indy looked at her with mock surprise, and to his astonishment, she slid her hands around his waist.

"Oh, I think you've got it in you."

Hmm, maybe he should be apologetic more often. He moved closer to her, lightly embracing her, inhaling her intoxicating scent. His lips brushed against hers. "Really? You think so?"

She dropped her head back. "Yeah, I'm sure you could've put up a good fight… and gotten all of us killed."

Before he could respond, her eyes flickered to a point just over his shoulder and widened. "Uh, you might just have another chance to put your talents to use, Indiana Jones. We've got company."

He turned to see a steamer, belching black smoke, chugging up behind them. He hurried over to the bridge, warned Jacques, then snatched a pair of binoculars hanging on a rack where he and Maggie had hooked their packs. He focused on the approaching vessel, and spotted a tall blond, also peering through binoculars. Unmistakably, Magnus Völler.

Trouble was catching up to them.

9
UNCHARTED TERRITORY

"I can't outrun him," Jacques shouted. "That's my enemy back there. He'll be glad to sink us so he can steal my business."

"Yeah, and he's working for my enemy. Guess that makes us allies again." Indy put the binoculars away. No need for them any longer. The steamer was already close enough to see the deck clearly.

"What are we going to do?" Maggie asked.

"You better get below," Indy said. "It could get nasty up here."

"And miss all the action? No thanks, Jones."

"They'll catch us at the next bend when I have to slow down," Jacques said.

As the steamer pulled within a boat-length of them, armed Gestapo agents took up positions on the deck. Indy moved to the railing, scanned the steamer, but didn't see Völler. "Magnus, what do you want?" he shouted.

Völler suddenly reappeared, climbing out of the hold, and Indy groaned as Völler dragged Archie Tan into view. "Hello, Jonesy, look who's here! Do you want your friend to join you?"

"Let him go, Völler," Indy said as the steamers churned closer and closer together.

“Let’s make a trade. You give me the jade sphere and I’ll give you Archie. Fair enough?”

“Not really. But I’ve got a compromise.” He glanced back at Maggie, who remained on the bridge with Jacques, hoping she would be impressed with his attempt to avoid violence. “You turn over Archie, and I’ll tell you where to find an Indian village not far away that has some treasures hidden under a large flat rock.”

Völler responded by snapping orders for his men to cross over as the two steamers edged closer and closer. “I’ll take that as a no,” Indy said and slugged the first Gestapo agent to step onto the deck. His head snapped back, then he smiled and kept coming. He grabbed Indy by the collar, and was about to slam his fist into Indy’s face when the steamer hit white water.

The deck shot up, dropped down, then bucked upward again. The Gestapo agent lost his grip on Indy, and both men stumbled several steps one way, then lurched another way in a drunken dance across the deck. A second agent, who had crossed over, followed them, doing the same drunken dance. Finally, Indy grabbed the railing. The first Nazi rushed him, took a swing, but Indy ducked just as the steamer plunged down again, and the German catapulted feet-first over the side.

“That was easy.” Indy grinned, then immediately was tackled by the other Nazi. They crashed to the deck, accompanied by a thunderous cracking as the two aged steamers collided. Indy and the Gestapo agent rolled over several times one way, then tumbled in the other direction, locked in an unholy embrace. Indy broke away, got to his feet, but fell backwards as the steamers collided again. The Nazi, on his knees, aimed a gun from a yard away.

“Behind you!” Völler yelled from somewhere in the background.

The agent turned just as Maggie slammed her lead pipe against his head. His knees buckled, he kneeled over, and Indy hauled himself upward again, the boat swaying and bucking and dancing beneath him. He nodded to Maggie. “Thanks, I know exactly how that feels.”

“Say good-bye to Archie!” Magnus Völler hollered. He’d crossed over, still holding Archie Tan as a hostage, one arm hooked around Tan’s neck, his other hand gripping a gun that he pressed against Archie’s temple.

“We’re taking on water,” Jacques shouted.

“Hear that? You’re going down, Jones. Last chance. Get me the jade stone now or Tan is dead.”

“Don’t give it to him, Indy!” Archie gasped, struggling to breathe through the chokehold Völler had on him. “You need the stone.”

The ships collided again, accompanied this time by a horrendous screech of metal tearing. Indy tumbled across the deck, head over heels, and ended up on his hands and knees just as Völler’s gun slid past him. He crawled over toward it, reached, and his fingertips grazed the barrel just as Völler snatched it off the deck.

“Get the jade sphere now!”

Indy stood unsteadily, hands held high. He couldn’t see Maggie or Archie, then both of them screamed in unison, and Jacques shouted: “Watch out!”

Indy turned just in time to see the river drop straight down as both steamers plunged simultaneously over a waterfall. Indy slid forward toward the bridge as the steamer nose-dived. He managed to snag onto his hanging backpack, then Maggie’s pack with the other hand. His legs dangled in mid-air for a couple of seconds, then the steamers crashed together at the bottom of the falls, spilling passengers and cargo as tons of foaming water swamped the deck. One moment Indy was on the deck, the next he was tumbling over and over through the tumultuous waters. He popped to the surface, bobbed in the turgid chop, struggling to hold onto the packs. The turbulence carried him away. He fought to stay afloat, as the choppy water washed over him, spinning him in circles. He went under, popped up, sank again. When he bobbed to the surface again, he gasped for air.

He was flipped onto his back and managed to raise his head. For an instant, he saw that the doomed steamers had keeled over at the bottom of the waterfall. Jacques’s vessel made lazy circles in the foaming water, the other steamer had jammed into the shallows near the far shore. He looked around, as best he could, but couldn’t see anyone else, friend or foe.

He struggled to escape the rapids and finally worked his way into gentler waters and toward shore. But even in waist-high water, the current knocked him over. He crawled the last few yards, dropped onto a sandy patch of shore, and released the two backpacks.

“You made it and you’ve got my pack,” Maggie said, sitting down next to him. She looked as if she’d just gone for a casual swim.

“You’re a good fellow in a pinch, Indy.”

“That’s good to know, thanks. How did you get here so fast?”

“I got tossed from the steamer when it was about halfway over the falls. The next thing I knew I was being carried downstream, then into shallow water. I saw you out in the rapids and followed you as best I could.”

Indy heard shouts and saw Archie and Jacques drifting downstream a few yards apart as they struggled to reach shore. Indy leaped up and ran toward Jacques, who clung to a pack he’d managed to salvage.

A few minutes later, the four of them were resting on shore. There was no sign of Magnus Völler or his colleagues. “Sorry about your boat,” Indy said to Jacques.

“I’m alive. That’s what’s important.” The steamer pilot seemed in a surprisingly upbeat mood. “Now I can get out of this jungle and do something else with my life.”

“You get out of the jungle *now*?” Archie said. “I go with you, no offense, Indy.”

“Any idea where we are?” Indy asked.

“We were supposed to turn on a tributary before the water got too rough, and definitely well before the waterfall. But we were under attack and I couldn’t navigate.”

Maggie, who had wandered down the shoreline, suddenly called out to them. “Hey, look at this.”

“What is it?” Indy asked, joining her.

“We’re definitely not the first ones here.”

Indy stepped closer to an old mahogany tree. Carved into the trunk was a double cross with a crescent moon above, a star below. “That symbol was on Kingston’s map, marking the trailhead.”

“But I thought we had another day or two to get there,” Maggie said. “It can’t be the same trailhead.”

“No, but it could lead to the same place,” Jacques said. “We took a shortcut when we went over the waterfall. The tributary winds about for miles before getting to the mark on the map.”

“I saw the same symbol back in the Simar village on that sacred rock,” Indy said. “I wish I’d had a chance to ask the chief about it, and what he knew about the pyramids.”

“I asked about the pyramids,” Maggie said. “He said it’s where the ghost people live, a dangerous place.”

“I wonder why they use the same symbol.”

“I’ve seen it many times by different tribes,” Jacques said. “It’s used for protection.”

“You mean we’re protected on this path?” Archie asked, hopefully.

“No, the ones who put it there are protected against us, or any other enemies.”

“Speaking of…” Indy glimpsed movement on the far side of the river and spotted Völler and the survivors of his team. One of the men was pointing at them. “Let’s hit the trail before our friends get over here.”

“Good idea,” Maggie said. “They’re going to have a tough time crossing with that current, but let’s not wait around to see how they do.”

“Hold on,” Archie said. “What are we going to eat? How are we going to get out? Let’s be practical.”

“Don’t worry about food,” Jacques said. “I know the jungle, and I have my gun. It’ll fire when it dries.”

“Actually, I think we might have a way out,” Archie said. “When I was captive, Völler talked to the drunken bush pilot. He’s out of money for his booze and he agreed to fly in and pick up Völler. If we can find him first, we just pay more money and he’ll take us out.”

“Don’t count on that guy,” Jacques said. “In my experience, McNulty doesn’t keep very many promises.”

“We don’t have any choice,” Archie said. “I *do* want to get out of this jungle.”

“First, we’ve got to find the pyramid,” Indy said, consulting his compass.

They watched for more trees with the double-cross and crescent moon symbol, and found them every few hundred feet.

“I’m surprised this trail is so clear,” Maggie said.

“It could be an animal trail,” Jacques said. “The peccary will keep a trail open.”

“Speaking of the trail, there’s one other thing,” Indy said. “Kingston’s letter mentioned that we might encounter a few ancient Mayan booby traps along the way. Well, maybe more than a few.”

“But probably not on this trail,” Archie said.

“Don’t count on that,” Indy replied.

Maggie hesitated in her tracks. “Kingston told you what to look for, I assume.”

Ah, not really. I think we’re on our own in that regard. He didn’t provide any specifics.”

Archie waved a hand. “I wouldn’t worry about it, especially if they are ancient. Everything would be rotted and destroyed by now.”

He’d no sooner spoken when Indy motioned everyone to stop. He pointed to a cross-moon symbol on a tree and then the trail in front of them.

“What is it?” Maggie asked.

Jacques reached down and pulled the intertwined vines aside revealing a hole with sharpened sticks at the bottom. “The jungle might’ve covered the hole on its own, but there are descendants of the ancients here—the ghost people—who are keeping up the tradition and the traps.”

“Have you ever seen them?” Indy asked.

Jacques shook his head. “Actually, until now, I never believed they existed. Ghost people, pyramids, nothing but stories. Now it looks like they’re both real.”

Nearby, the underbrush rustled and Indy reached immediately for his whip. Jacques raised his gun. They waited for whatever it was to emerge. A brilliant purple feather fluttered to the ground.

“Oh, it was just a bird,” Archie said.

“I don’t think so,” Jacques said. “It’s another warning. Trouble ahead, if we continue.”

“Maybe so.” Indy looked back, remembering they weren’t the only ones who survived the waterfalls. “And trouble behind, if we go back.”

10
BENEATH THE CANOPY

It felt as if the jungle were breathing, that it was a living, conscious creature slowly wrapping its multitude of arms around them. The lush surroundings seemed closer than a minute ago, and the patterns of leaves formed faces that peered at them. Snakes blended into the verdant landscape and hung from every branch, like Christmas tree decorations, ready to drop on them as they passed by.

"Are you all right?" Archie asked.

Indy snapped out of his reverie. "Yeah, I was just thinking that we're being watched, that we've been under scrutiny since we started following this trail."

"By what?" Archie asked, looking around.

"Animals. Creatures. Ghost people." Indy peered into the dense forest. "Imagine the descendants of the mysterious sect of Mayans, who had reached the bottom of Central America, still living here, guarding the temple. Ready to kill whoever entered their domain."

"We could always follow the river back until we reach the tributary and wait for McNulty, the drunken pilot, to arrive," Jacques suggested.

"I didn't fall over a waterfall and nearly drown three times just so we can turn back," Indy said. "I've got to find that pyramid."

“I’m with you,” Maggie said.

“Yes, yes, I agree,” Archie added. “If we turn back now, we meet Magnus Völler and Nazi gang again.”

Jacques shrugged. Indy could tell he would prefer going back, but he joined the others in agreement. “Fine then, let’s stick together and move on.”

“I’ll take the lead,” Archie said. “I know quite a bit about booby traps. I study them. I even make them myself.”

“Yeah, I know.” It seemed like only yesterday when he was dealing with Archie’s traps, Indy thought, following Archie around the deadly pit.

As they continued on, Indy wondered why Kingston hadn’t told him about the ghost people. Maybe Kingston had some arrangement with them that allowed him to visit the pyramid. He just hoped it extended to him and the others.

“Stop!” Archie shouted and Indy nearly bumped into him.

“What is it?”

Archie stepped aside, revealing a skull impaled on a post, and below it, the double-cross/crescent moon/star symbol. Indy examined the skull and the symbol, trying to determine how recently they’d been added to the scenery along the trail. Suddenly, something colorful moved inside the skull and Indy wrenched back as a bright orange and black coral snake slithered out one eye socket and into the other one.

“No doubt another warning. I guess we’re on the right path.”

“Speaking of the path, take a look at it,” Archie said.

Beyond the post and skull, the path widened and was paved with flagstones. “This will make it easier. I bet it goes right to the pyramid,” Maggie said.

“Not so fast,” Archie cautioned.

“Agreed. Take a close look.” Some of the stones were marked with the same symbol for protection. Again, Indy figured it wasn’t for *their* protection.

“Do we step on the marked ones or avoid them?” Archie asked.

Indy rubbed the back of his sweaty neck. “I say no. Nobody likes people walking on their flag.”

“Then again, it could be a trick,” Maggie said. With that, she walked ahead, paying no mind to the marking on the stones, until she passed the last marked stones.

“What are you doing?” Indy shouted and ducked, expecting darts, arrows, spears… snakes.

Nothing happened.

She turned and smiled. “C’mon, boys.”

“You’re nuts!” Indy shook his head. “You could’ve gotten us all killed.”

“But I didn’t.”

Archie quickly joined her. “How did you know it was okay?” he asked.

“They’re stone, right? They need weight to trigger anything. I’m light and I was the first.” She glanced back at Indy and Jacques. “I wouldn’t want to be last, though.”

Indy smiled. “Thanks.”

He studied the stones again, looking for a pattern. “Jacques, how about if I go first and step on the blank stones. If I make it, you follow.”

Jacques shook his head. “No need for you to sacrifice yourself. I’ll go first and you follow.”

Before Indy had a chance to reply, Jacques walked ahead, then motioned to Indy. “Blank stones. No problem.”

“Not for you, at least.”

The blank stones looked lower now, as if they’d dropped a couple of inches. Or was he imagining it? The jungle was impenetrable, a riot of interwoven vines and tropical shrubbery choking off a few trees, making it impossible to walk around the trail. He noticed an overhanging branch and smiled as he loosened his whip, unfurled it, and snapped it around the branch.

“Be right there,” he called out, then swung across. He released his whip from the branch and as he reeled it in a gray-colored oval object the size of a basketball dropped from the tree. Within seconds, a dark cloud of angry wasps emerged.

“Run!”

They lurched ahead, forgetting any concern about booby traps. In their rush to get away, they veered off the trail, which probably saved them, Indy thought as they finally came to a stop. They were free of the wasps, but as they moved on, they couldn’t find any markings on the trees, or any sign of the trail. They struggled on through the jungle, the high canopy forming a roof above them where monkeys roamed and occasionally screamed at them.

The sun was setting when they reached a stream. A log rested along the shore, an inviting spot to relieve his aching feet, Indy thought. They decided to hang the pair of hammocks Jacques had salvaged and would sleep in shifts through the night, two sleeping, the other two on watch.

Darkness collapsed around them. The roar of a jaguar echoed through the jungle. Leaves rustled. The night came alive with sounds: insects, frogs, fish splashing in the stream, other animal sounds. Maggie tied one of the hammocks between a pair of red-skinned gumbo limbo trees and crawled inside of it. “Delicious,” she murmured, settling in.

Jacque claimed the second hammock, since he’d had the foresight to pack them.

“I think we’re lost, Indy,” Archie said as he settled on the log. Across from him, Indy leaned against a tree and bit off a piece of beef jerky.

“But we’re alive.” Indy tried to sound optimistic, even though he felt anything but right now. “Look at it this way. We’ve got water now as well as the fruit that we picked, and besides, there’s always tomorrow.”

“Ah, Indy. I’m glad we have time to talk because there’s something I haven’t told you about the material Professor Kingston left me.”

“Yeah, what’s that?”

“I really wanted you to take this journey, so I removed a letter he’d written as a warning about the ghost people.”

“You did *what?*”

“So sorry. I was going to tell you about it in Cana, but then Maggie knocked you out, and I simply forgot.”

“Yeah, glad you remembered. What did he say?”

“They’re dangerous and they’ll do everything they can to protect the pyramid. But he said you would know what to do.”

Indy brushed something off his neck that was tickling him.

“How did he deal with them?”

“He didn’t say. Maybe he thought it best if you figured it out on your own.”

“That figures. Another test to prove my worthiness, I suppose.” Kingston always had tests for him, challenges to overcome.

“Not to upset you further, but you should come sit on the log here. Right now, I think.”

Indy froze. “Why?”

“There’s something crawling over your head.” Archie squinted. “I can’t see what it is, but…”

Indy realized he’d wiped part of a spider web off his neck. He jumped, spun around and came face-to-face with a pair of fist-sized, hairy arachnids engaged in a frenetic dance on a web.

He quickly backed away. “Thank you. I don’t need spiders copulating on my head.”

Jacques, still awake, sat up at the mention of the spiders cavorting near his hammock. “Oh, yes, watch closely. The female is going to bite off the head of the male after they complete the act. Very interesting mating conduct, don’t you think, Indy?”

“Reminds me of a certain lady from my past.”

“If those spiders are the greatest danger we face, I’ll be very pleased,” Archie said. His comment was followed by a loud screech of a large cat somewhere nearby, and an answering snarl of another cat. A few minutes later, something large splashed in the stream behind them. A chill raced up Indy’s spine.

“What was that?” Archie whispered.

“Probably a peccary.”

Archie stood up. “Oh, no. Not those pigs.”

“As long as it’s alone, it won’t bother us.” Indy hoped he was right.

“Or it could’ve been a caiman or a croc, I suppose,” Jacques said.

Despite the warmth of the air, the chill in Indy’s spine spread throughout the rest of his body. “I don’t think we’ll fall asleep on our watch with all the action around here.”

Wrong.

The next thing Indy knew it was dawn and the watch had never changed. He and Archie had both fallen asleep seated on the ground, heads resting on their arms, which were draped over the log. Archie snored next to him. Maggie and Jacques slept comfortably in the hammocks. He listened to their deep breathing, his eyes begging to close, his body complaining about the position in which he’d slept. A crick in his neck, a cramp in his shoulder. Next time, he would claim one of the hammocks, he decided, and shut his eyes again.

Suddenly, he heard the soft crunch of leaves, sticks. Another animal? He lifted his head, the sound stopped. Once again, he sensed they were being watched. The skin on the back of his neck prickled; gooseflesh erupted on his arm.

He wasn't sure if it was human or animal—until he heard the whispering.

11
THE LOST PYRAMID

Indy feigned sleep, one hand on his knife, waiting, expecting an attack. Hard to believe that Magnus Völler could've found them already. Besides, subtlety wasn't Völler's way. He would've charged into the camp by now. Maybe he'd just imagined the footsteps and the whispers, or maybe it was the ghost people trying to spook him.

Finally, he sat up, looked around. He couldn't be certain they were alone, but he couldn't sit here all day waiting for an assault from an invisible enemy, either. He shook Archie's shoulder, then gave the two hammocks a gentle shove. After a few grunts and groans and stretching, everyone started talking at once, apologizing for not waking up.

"It's too late to worry about it," Indy said. "Let's get going."

"What about breakfast?" Archie asked.

"We can't make a fire to cook," Maggie said. "It's too dangerous."

"But we don't have to cook to eat," Jacques responded and passed out some tropical fruits.

Indy bit into a plum-like fruit that tasted like sour cherries and made his mouth pucker. He was about to comment on it when he noticed Maggie staring into the jungle.

"We've got company," she said softly.

A tan-skinned man with a thin, wispy beard, filthy khaki pants, a tattered shirt and bandana stepped into view. He raised his arm forward. "*Sieg Heil!*"

For a moment no one spoke, then Indy raised an arm. "Sieg Heil!"

"Where is Professor Völler?" the man said in heavily accented English. "We wait and wait."

"Zee *herr* professor ezz on his way," Indy answered in his best German accent. "What is going on here now? *Que pasa aqui, hombre?*"

The invitation to respond in Spanish led to a rapid flurry of commentary with an abundance of slang and cursing and hand waving. Indy got the gist of it. He and his men weren't happy about the situation. They were constantly under threat from the natives, and something about a grandmother that he couldn't understand.

"Did you get that, Indy?" Maggie asked, her voice still quiet, measured. "He and his men apparently are *guaqueros*—pillagers—hired by Völler to secure the pyramids from the Indians, but it's not working. They captured the tribe's matriarch on Völler's orders and are threatening to kill her if the ghost people attack them again."

"Tell him to take us to the pyramids so we can see for ourselves."

The pillager shook his head vehemently. "I no go there. Too dangerous. You go, you die."

Archie looked about uneasily. "Maybe we should listen to this man. He knows about this place. We know very little."

"We'll see about that," Indy said. "After all, we didn't kidnap the old lady."

He asked the man for his name. "*Como se llama*."

"Sudao."

"Okay, Sudao, you wait for Herr Professor Völler and we'll go to the pyramid."

Sudao frowned. "You no wait for your army?"

"Sometimes you don't need the army. We'll talk and negotiate with the natives."

Sudao shook his head. "They no do business with you. They will kill you."

* * *

After Sudao led them back to the trail and they headed toward the pyramid, Maggie began to feel uncomfortable, worried. Indy definitely didn't shy away from trouble. He'd no doubt faced his share of danger in the past, but that was then and this was now. Who knew what they were going to encounter? Was it even worth it to follow his old professor's wishes? There was a fine line between heroic behavior and bloody stupidity. Whatever happened today would determine which path they were following.

"Aren't you concerned about what Sudao said?" she asked as they walked several paces behind Archie who surveyed the trail for booby traps.

"We didn't kidnap the old lady. They did. We separate ourselves from the *guaqueros* and Völler. We're the good guys."

"Considering that you still want to break into the pyramid, how are the ghost people going to know we're any different from the others?"

Indy rubbed his neck. "I haven't figured that part out yet."

"Great." So far, stupidity held the upper hand on this adventure, she thought.

After an uneventful hour walking through intense humidity, in and out of the harsh sunlight, Archie abruptly stopped. At first, Maggie thought he'd found another trap. Instead, he was staring at a clearing containing a circle of grass huts. If this was where the ghost people lived, they were nowhere in sight. The place looked abandoned. Appropriate for a ghost tribe, she decided.

Nearby, a tree was marked with the now familiar double cross symbol. "The village could be rigged with booby traps," she said.

"Maybe they don't need them," Archie remarked.

"The ghost people," Jacques whispered and looked around warily.

White-painted faces poked out of the jungle, peering around leaves the size of his head and through drooping branches so green that their painted faces seemed surreal. Dark eyes, high cheekbones, prominent noses and ebony bangs; descendants of the Mayans, she thought. Arrows and blowguns protruded from the greenery, aimed directly at them.

"We come in peace," Indy said.

Good luck with that, she thought.

An arrow whistled past Indy's shoulder and slammed into a tree next to him. Jacques snapped out his gun, a mistake. A half dozen

arrows and darts penetrated his chest and neck. One arrow passed through his neck. His gun fired once harmlessly in the air before he collapsed.

Instantly, the ghost people emerged from the forest, surrounding the survivors, and all Maggie could see were knives and spears, blowguns and arrows and angry eyes. *Now what?*

* * *

At least they weren't all immediately killed, Indy thought. That was good, or was it? Maybe they faced a painful, protracted death. Being flayed came to mind or roasted on a low fire, or both. They were quickly tied together and dragged down a trail. No one among the ghost people seemed to be in charge. But they knew exactly what to do and where to take them.

When he was here as a grad student with Kingston, they'd never seen the ghost people. Kingston had kept assuring Indy they were nearby, but the Protectors, as he'd called them, stayed out of sight. He'd already made several trips and had worked out an arrangement with them. However, when the guaqueros arrived, Kingston had feared the agreement would collapse. Fortunately, Indy and Völler had managed to drive the pillagers away. Who would've guessed that years later, he and Völler would be back, and Völler would be working with guaqueros, and Indy would be a captive of the ghost people.

He felt a sense of familiarity and realized that they were walking past their old campsite. A minute or so later, the jungle trail fell away, opening to a plaza with three pyramids, draped in vegetation, one dominating the other two. They were hustled forward toward the large pyramid. As they moved around the side, more ghost people appeared.

An old man, probably the chief, was seated on a thatched throne and surrounded by men in loincloths whose bodies were painted white. The chief wore a garment decked with feathers. He held a shield blazing with that ever-present symbol of protection. Indy scanned the area and realized that the throne had been placed in front of the blocks that Kingston's diggers had removed to enter the pyramid.

Indy was pushed forward toward the throne. The chief seemed fascinated by Indy's whip, which still hung from his belt. He conferred with a younger man who was missing an arm below the elbow. Indy took a cautious step forward and said the one word that he hoped the chief would recognize.

Indy tapped his chest, "Kingston."

The chief lifted his head, stared into Indy's face. A good sign, Indy thought. People who are about to kill a captive usually avoid looking into their face. The chief turned to the younger man again, said something to him.

To Indy's surprise, One Arm spoke up, addressing Indy in Spanish. "*No eres Kingston*."

Indy responded that he had come here with Kingston and chased away the *guaqueros*. Now more of them were back, causing trouble. "*Los guaqueros no son mis amigos*."

One Arm and the chief exchanged a few words, then laughed. "He says that Kingston told him that one day a man would return and he would have a long snake sticking out from his pants. That was something we all waited for, especially the women."

He laughed again and Indy hesitantly joined in.

"Did you get that, Indy?" Maggie laughed, or do I need to translate?"

"Ha, I got it."

One Arm continued in slow, halting Spanish. "He thinks that you have the snake hanging on your side, but that it will disappoint the women."

He felt Maggie poke him in the side. They were making progress, but Indy knew that anything could happen yet. The humor could be a way of easing the tension before a kill. He looked about furtively for a way to escape, but didn't see any possibility. Even if they did get away, the warriors could easily hunt them down. They were in the ghost people's territory, after all.

"Show him the jade sphere," Archie suggested, stepping forward.

Instantly, one of the warriors jabbed Archie with a spear. Archie held up his hands and backed away.

Maggie, meanwhile, took a chance by asking One Arm about his missing limb. He scowled at her for half a minute and the air crackled with tension. Then his face softened, and he told her that when he was a boy he'd been attacked by a panther while hunting

with his older brother. His brother died trying to save him. Two days later, he was captured by hunters from another tribe, taken downriver to a white settlement. He survived the injury, but his arm was cut off. He lived with missionaries for several years, then found his way back to his people.

"So that's how you learned Spanish," Maggie said.

He nodded, then turned to Indy. "Kingston lied to us. He said he would not tell anyone about this place, that he would protect us. Now others have come here and they also say they are with Kingston. But they kidnapped Great Mother and tried to enter the Temple of the Cosmos. Now you come to cause more disturbances."

Indy knew what was coming next. The ancestors had to be appeased, balance restored, and that meant sacrifice. "I have something to show your chief."

He slowly and carefully removed his pack and took out the leather pouch. The warriors tensed, their weapons ready to strike. Indy gently removed the jade sphere, holding it as if it were a bomb about to explode in his hands. The warriors stepped back, murmuring and whispering.

"We have come here to return the sacred sphere to the Temple of the Cosmos where it belongs. Professor Kingston gave me instructions where to put it. It's very powerful. No one should touch it."

One Arm conferred with the old chief. Indy thought he'd gotten the upper hand. After all, he had promised to leave the jade sphere in the pyramid where it belonged. But the chief had one request.

"He says you can enter the pyramid, but first you must save the Great Mother from the grave robbers."

So that was it. "I'll do everything I can to get her back."

One Arm clasped Maggie's elbow. "She stays with us until you come back with the Great Mother. If you fail, she will die."

12
THE GREAT MOTHER

“Who is the Great Mother?” Archie asked as they walked away from the pyramids, guided by several young warriors.

“I’ve got an idea who she is and if I’m right we could be in trouble.”

“Who is she?”

“I met her once; that was enough. It was after my spat with Völler. He’d been sent away and the guaqueros were gone, too. Kingston was feeling good and asked me if I wanted to meet an old woman who lived in a tree.”

“Like a monkey?”

“Yeah, like a monkey with a bad attitude.”

“Who is she, a Mayan?”

“European, from Belgium, I think. She came to Panama to Cana during the gold rush to work in the oldest profession.”

“I see. But how did she get in the tree?”

“One of the gold miners fell in love with her. They decided to get lost together and went into the jungle to make a new life. Supposedly, they took a trunk of gold nuggets with them. They used the nuggets to trade for supplies a couple of times a year. When her

lover died, she moved even deeper in the jungle and built her tree house. That was about thirty years ago."

"The Indians didn't bother her?" Archie asked.

"They considered her a holy being, the return of one of the sky goddesses, or Great Mother."

They moved on in silence. Indy was relieved that they didn't have to worry about booby traps as long as they were being guided. But he worried about Maggie, worried about what was happening to her right now, and worried about how they were going to save her life. Somehow, they had to get the old woman away from Sudao and the gang and make it back to the pyramids with her in tow.

"I understand why the ghost people want her freed," Archie said. "But why would they consider a woman of her nature to be a goddess?"

"You'll see. She's really quite fierce."

"She would have to be fierce to live out here for so long," Archie agreed.

"When Kingston and I arrived at her tree house, she threw pots and pans at us and shot several arrows. We had to hide behind the trees until Kingston convinced her that she'd met him once and they were friends."

"What was her tree house like?"

"A zoo. We spent the night with monkeys and birds, and in the morning a panther walked right through the place. She said he was her friend."

After half an hour of walking, Indy realized the warriors were no longer visible. They'd simply blended into the jungle. He stopped. "I think we're close to where the guaqueros are holding the old woman. We've got to pretend we're Nazis again. We'll tell Sudao that we were attacked and that you and I got away."

"Hope they believe we escaped," Archie said.

They moved forward and quickly reached a clearing near a tributary. Indy pointed out the tree house fifty feet above the ground. They started forward, but Indy stopped when he spotted Sudao standing near a river. He was about to call out to him when he noticed a tall blond man and two others step out of the shadows. Magnus Völler and two of his Gestapo buddies.

Indy motioned to Archie and they both moved back out of sight. "This is no good, Indy," Archie whispered. "How are we going to

rescue Old Mother?"

"It's Great Mother. Don't know yet. Stay here out of sight. I'm going to try to work my way closer and see what I can find out."

* * *

The old woman in the cage looked pathetic, a skeleton wearing rags, straggly hair, skin like wrinkled leather, Völler thought as he waited on the riverbank for his jungle assistant to paddle ashore. Instead of keeping the old woman tied up in the tree house, Sudao and his grave-robbing compatriots had imprisoned her in a bamboo cage that hung from a rope that stretched across the river.

To Völler, it was clear that they were making more work than necessary. They had to paddle out and feed her, tie her hands and gag her at night, and keep a pair of guards here constantly to ward off the Indians.

"Did you see how she fought me?" Sudao said in broken English when he reached shore. She's a devil, an old devil, and very strong."

Völler wanted to take Sudao by the neck, throttle him, and throw him to the caimans that were swimming below the dangling cage. Instead, he turned his back on him, and walked away from the river. He should've just tied her up in the tree house, gagged her, and left her there. Imbecile or not, he still needed his help.

Sudao hurried after him. "She's very wild, like an animal. We couldn't keep her up there with us."

Völler shook his head in disgust. "Her people could've attacked, killed all of you, and rescued her."

"No, we guard her at night. We shoot them if they try to get her with a canoe or climb out to her. If they cut the rope, she falls in the river and drowns. No, her people won't try to save her."

Maybe Sudao wasn't so stupid, Völler thought. After all, these common pillagers weren't so different from archaeologists. They knew how to find artifacts, and how to sell them. Of course, guaqueros, like Sudao and his buddies, didn't care about theories or legends, not unless they added value to what they'd dug up.

He realized Sudao was still talking, explaining how he gave the old lady food and water twice a day by passing it to her on the end of a long pole. Taking her captive had been a good idea. Völler's idea. If the ghost people thought so much of her, they wouldn't attack and

take the chance that she would be killed. That assumption so far had proven correct, in spite of the cage over the river.

He could smell food cooking in the tree house. Night would fall within an hour. He posted his men on the ground, then climbed the rope ladder, with Sudao scrambling up behind him. He had more important matters to think about than the old lady. Jones wanted to get into the pyramid as much as he did. They were on the same quest and both knew that this jungle expedition was just an information-gathering journey. The real search lay ahead, beyond the jungle.

Unfortunately, information was in short supply right now. Völler had sent a couple of his men to find out what happened to Jones, but they hadn't returned. With each passing hour, the likelihood of seeing them again diminished. He conceded they were probably lost to the savages.

But then Jones might've suffered a similar fate. Tomorrow morning he would find out.

* * *

Indy overheard just enough of Völler's remarks. He had a good idea of the situation now as he worked his way back to Archie.

"I was worried about you," Archie said. "It's getting dark and you were still gone."

"Dark is good. It means we don't have to stay hidden."

Indy explained his plan and a few minutes later, as night settled over the jungle, they moved into the clearing and headed toward the river. A symphony of croaking and chirring, growling and screeching accompanied them as the nighttime jungle came alive.

"I still prefer city life," Archie remarked, glancing around uneasily.

Indy took a sidelong glance toward the illuminated tree house. The smoky smell of roasting meat drifted their way along with the sound of laughter. "Let them chuckle all they want. They won't be laughing later."

"I hope Maggie is all right," Archie said. "I suppose they fed her a meal. I wouldn't mind one myself."

Indy touched his lips with his index finger, then pointed at the guard seated on the river bank, smoking a cigarette near a low-burning fire. They moved quietly closer, then Indy nodded to Archie

and they moved apart. A few moments later, Archie strolled up to the guard. “Excuse me, where would I find the lady who lives in the tree house?”

The astonished guard jumped up, reached back for his rifle. But Indy had already snatched it. “Looking for this?” He slammed the butt of the rifle against the side of the man’s head and he slumped to the ground.

“Indy, watch out!”

Another guard that neither of them had seen leaped at Indy, his knife flashing through the firelight. Indy danced away from him. The man lunged at him, jabbing with the knife. Indy ducked low and the guard tumbled over his back, the knife penetrating just the inky air. Indy grabbed for the rifle, but the man swung his legs around and knocked Indy’s feet out from under him. He leaped forward, raised his knife. Archie slammed him in the head with a stout, smoldering log from the fire. Sparks flew, drifting into the dark like fireflies, and the guard dropped down next to his companion.

Indy pulled a length of rope from his pack. “Tie them together before they wake up. Then cut off their sleeves and gag them. I’m going for the old lady.”

Indy had been so preoccupied with the guards that he didn’t have a chance to see where she was being held. But now he saw the cage in the moonlight hanging just above the water, suspended by ropes that were tied to trees on either side of the river. A figure lay curled in a fetal position on the bottom of the cage.

He had to move fast before a shift change brought new guards to the river. He approached one of the trees supporting the cage, and climbed up the trunk until he reached the rope. He swung out away from the trunk, dangling as he made his way toward the cage, one hand over the other.

As he approached the cage, he realized that in his rush he hadn’t thought out his plan well. His weight was causing the cage to sink toward the water. How did the old lady’s captors bring her food? Certainly not this way. They probably paddled to the cage in a dugout that was hidden somewhere along the river.

Too late now. He was almost there. The old lady, Flora, that was her name, was sitting up, staring at him. Her hands were tied behind her back. A rag was stuffed in her mouth. No doubt she’d given them a hard time.

His feet now dragged in the water. That was when he saw red, gleaming eyes in the moonlight. *Caimans*. They circled the cage, ready for the kill. Indy quickly lifted his feet and kept going. He could barely hold onto the rope now and felt enormous relief when he reached the cage and climbed on top of it.

The cage suddenly sank below the surface of the water. Several feet from the cage, one of the ropes was beginning to unravel. If it snapped, the cage would fall into the water and Flora would drown. She screamed into her gag, swung her head from side to side, threw her body right, left, right again. “Sorry, Flora. I’m in a hurry. I’ve got to get you out of there.”

Indy started crawling down the side of the cage toward the door, but the cage tilted and he sank into the water to his waist. Luminous pairs of red eyes shot through the water toward him. He quickly scrambled back up, aware that the caiman was snapping at his boots, lifting up out of the water on its powerful legs, using its tail to propel it. It splashed back into the river.

The cage kept sinking, deeper and deeper, and the rope groaned under his weight. No time to lose.

He slammed his boot against the bamboo cage, but it bounced away. He wedged his heel between two pieces of bamboo and pulled with his fingers as he pushed with his heel. The bamboo slowly spread, then one piece snapped. He jammed his other boot down, pulled and pushed and the cage started coming apart. He worked his legs through the opening and continued widening it as he pushed his hips through and lowered himself into the water.

“I’m getting you out of here, Flora. Do you remember me?” He told her his name, explaining that he’d visited her with Kingston. She stared at him with wild eyes as he took out his knife so he could free her hands. First he pulled the rag from her mouth and she shouted and screamed and kicked him.

Indy tried to quiet her, but she kept yelling and he couldn’t understand any of it. It was no use. He stuffed the rag back in her mouth. “When you calm down, I’ll take it out.”

He cut the rope binding her hands, but he was ready for her when she started swinging at him. He caught her arms and pulled them down. “Look, Flora. I’m not going to hurt you. I’m taking you out of here. If you stop fighting me, it will be a lot easier.”

He let go of her hands and before she could hit him again, he lifted her by the waist and raised her up to the opening. She barely weighed ninety pounds, he guessed. At first, she struggled to remove the gag, then she reached up and grabbed the cage. He pushed harder and she worked her way through the opening. This time she didn't scream, a good sign.

He figured he'd have to carry her on his back in order to get her ashore. He hoped she would stay calm so he could hold on. But by the time he crawled to the top of the cage, she was gone. She'd climbed up on the rope on her own, hanging upside down, grasping it with her arms and legs.

Indy followed her, preferring to go hand over hand, his legs dangling, but the rope was too low to the water and he had to duplicate Flora's method. Moving along with surprising speed, she was already halfway to the shore when Indy realized that he wasn't going to catch up with her. He imagined her bolting back to her tree house and getting caught all over again, or disappearing in the jungle.

No, he couldn't let that happen. "Archie, where are you?" He tried to yell and whisper at the same time. No answer. He picked up speed, but Flora was just a dark shape near the shore now. He yelled for Archie again, this time louder. Still no answer.

Then he heard Flora screeching and babbling again. She was fighting someone on shore. Maybe two new guards had shown up, disabled Archie and now struggled with Flora. He swung his legs down, dropped into the shallow water and scrambled toward shore.

"Now stop it, lady. Just stop it!"

Indy was relieved to hear Archie's voice and he almost laughed when he saw the little woman holding her own against him as he tried to keep her from escaping. "Help me, Indy!"

He hurried toward the pair, stumbled, got to his feet, and groaned as he saw two more armed men rushing forward. They stopped, raised pistols. Magnus Völler's agents, Indy thought, and he was caught flat-footed, unable to attack or flee.

Arrows struck one of the men in the side, the other in the neck. More arrows flew, piercing deeply into both men. They cried out, gasped, groaned, and dropped like flies to the ground. Indy spun around to see several warriors, bows drawn. One threat eliminated,

he thought, and a new one to confront. The warriors aimed their arrows at Indy and Archie.

* * *

Maggie floated three feet above the ground, unable to move her arms or legs. At the insistence of her guards, she'd crawled into the hammock hanging between two trees a short distance from the pyramids. Then they'd tightly tied strips of vine around the hammock holding her in place. It didn't matter that she had no interest in running or hiding. The ghost people wanted her secure and fixed to one place.

Darkness had fallen long ago, and the jungle had closed in around her. It seemed that with each passing hour the chances that Indy and Archie would find the Great Mother, get her away from her captors, and bring her back were less and less. She tried not to think about what might've happened to them. The possibilities were too numerous to consider and most of them held deadly outcomes that left her stranded in the jungle, a captive, dependent on people who weren't exactly sympathetic to her plight. Even the Nazis might be preferable.

She tensed as a snarling issued from the underbrush. A crunching sound followed, then rasping breath. She slowly shifted her gaze toward the jungle and her blood froze: green cat eyes. The creature's sleek head was nearly level with her hammock. The panther hissed, bared its gleaming white teeth and crouched, ready to pounce.

* * *

Indy didn't move, but Flora rushed over to the ghost people and spoke fluently in a Mayan dialect. She was no longer screaming and thrashing. Now she seemed to be directing them. The warriors abruptly lowered their bows, then disappeared into the jungle. Flora scowled at Indy, then motioned for him and Archie to follow.

The ghost people and Flora moved swiftly along the trail and Indy was concerned that Archie was going to fall behind and get lost. "Hurry, we're going to lose them."

"I am going as fast as I can."

Indy finally slowed for him and the others disappeared into the night.

"Sorry, Indy. I'm too tired to go any faster."

"It's all right. We'll find our way." But it wasn't long before Indy realized they were lost. They continued on, but there was no clear trail anymore. Just trees and more trees, brush and more brush, the endless lush greenery. Finally, they stopped.

"Maybe we'll have better luck in the morning," Archie suggested, stretching his arms. "At least, when I go to sleep, the jungle disappears. I dream of San Francisco, my family, and my friends."

"Your life," Indy said.

"My life, yes, but before the Nazi bastard came after me. Nothing has been the same since he entered my shop and demanded to see the jade sphere."

A chatter of animal sounds—cooing, cawing, howling, screeching, snorting—seemed to grow louder. The underbrush rustled nearby, causing Archie to move closer to Indy. "On second thought, it might be safer to continue on our way, whatever way that might be."

A branch snapped, alerting Indy to the sound of approaching footsteps. He reached for his knife. Something was coming their way and it was close. Too quiet for a peccary, but not a panther. He tensed, raised the knife, squinted into the jungle waiting for something to burst out of the underbrush. A moment later, Flora emerged as if she'd been walking on a sidewalk in a park.

Hands on hips, she shook her head. She was completely adapted to the jungle life. She was at home here as much as a panther or howler monkey. "You saved me from the cage," she said in slow English. "Now I will save you from the jungle. Follow me."

Indy and Archie exchanged a look, then headed after her.

13
MIND GAMES

Moonlight beamed down onto the shrouded plaza where the three pyramids peeked through the jungle canopy. Indy was out of breath, exhausted. He felt like collapsing, but he immediately looked about for Maggie. He shouted her name. No answer. He caught up to Flora. "Ask your friends where my lady friend is. We had to leave her here. The chief said she would be freed when we brought you back."

"I brought *you* back," she answered.

"Yeah, we're here. Where's Maggie?"

Two warriors took Indy by the arm and walked him up to the throne where the old chief was seated, still decked in a feathered gown and holding his shield. Indy couldn't help wondering if he'd sat here the entire time they were gone, or if he'd returned from a hammock in the nearby village to re-take his place on the throne.

Indy pointed at Flora. "The Great Mother is free. Where is my friend, Maggie?"

The chief stared at Indy, but remained silent.

Flora stepped forward, yammered at the old chief, and sounded as if she was badgering him. The chief remained impassive, replying with a few words.

Flora turned to Indy. “You heard him. He said she’s inside the pyramid waiting for you.”

“Inside, already?”

Indy bowed to the chief, thanked him, then started around the throne toward the pyramid. The warriors immediately shouted, grabbed his arms and pulled him away from the throne. They led him along one side of the pyramid to a low opening, but it wasn’t the one that Kingston had used to enter the grand edifice.

He crawled through the opening and into a room illuminated by flickering torchlight. He was immediately confronted by a warrior - One Arm - and remembered that he spoke Spanish. *“Donde esta mi amiga, Maggie?”*

“I’m right here, Indy.”

He looked past One Arm and saw Maggie sitting on the floor, her back to the wall. “Are you all right?”

“I’m better than I was earlier. I was nearly torn apart by a panther. Balam here saved me. He drove it away with his spear. I thought that was damn brave of him since he lost an arm to a panther when he was a kid.”

Indy nodded to the warrior, then started to tell him that he’d brought back the Great Mother.

“Don’t bother,” Maggie interrupted as she stood up. “They somehow knew more than an hour ago that you’d gotten her free and were on your way.”

“Huh, the jungle telegraph, I guess.”

“Do you still have the jade sphere?” she asked.

“Of course, it’s time to find out how it works. Maybe One Arm, I mean Balam, will guide us.”

“Don’t count on it,” Maggie replied. “He told me none of them go beyond this room. Too many deadly traps.”

The warrior quickly moved toward the entrance as someone crawled through the opening.

“Indy, you’re not leaving me behind, are you?” Archie called out.

Archie, the city boy, sounded distinctly uneasy, as he had throughout most of their trip through this jungle. “Wouldn’t think of it. We need your talents to protect us from booby traps.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Balam had abandoned the room, leaving them to their own devices. That could be good or bad, Indy thought and stepped under

an archway, into the next room, a round room about fifteen feet across, with a pair of burning torches on either side of the entrance.

"I did learn some things about the pyramid while I was waiting," Maggie said. "This is the Chamber of the Sun. They call the next room the Chamber of the Moon. That one is worse."

Worse: he really didn't like the sound of that. "Good to know. See anything, Archie?"

"I think that finding and returning the Great Mother was only the first challenge that the ghost people set up for us. You see, they lit the torches for us, but don't pick up either of them."

"Why not?" Maggie asked. "We need light."

"We'll take those two unlit torches and light them. If we pick up either of these, we're in for a surprise. The holders are levers."

Indy followed Archie's gaze toward two large blocks of stone, one above each torch. "I see your point. That could hurt."

"I'll get the other torches," Maggie said and started forward.

"Wait!" Archie grabbed her arm. "Don't be so anxious to walk into trouble."

"What's the problem?"

"I'm not sure, but…"

Indy walked across the chamber and as he did, pieces of the floor dropped away, leaving a deep gash between him and the other two.

"Indy, you're no better than Maggie," Archie shouted. "I should go back and let you find your way."

"Don't go, Archie. I'll make it up later. Here, catch!" He reached for one of the torches and tossed it across the gap. Maggie snagged it. She carefully lit the torch from one that was burning.

"That's good," Indy said. "Maybe if we can shed some light on the matter, we can figure out how you two can get across. He grabbed the other torch, but when he tossed it, his foot slipped and the torch fell short. Astonishingly, instead of dropping into the hole, it landed at floor level, hanging in mid-air. At the same time, water spilled from the end of a pipe near Indy's foot, apparently triggered when he lifted the torch.

The water spread out, flowing out over the hole, rather than falling into it. "It's an optical illusion," Indy shouted.

"I know." Maggie walked out into space, or what appeared to be a bottomless abyss covered with a thin layer of water. She snatched the

torch and walked back to Archie where she lit it. Then both of them quickly joined Indy on the other side of the chamber.

"Onward," Indy said, taking one more look back. He didn't know how the ancient Mayans or the ghost people had created the effect, and he didn't care right now. He was ready to move ahead, hoping that the traps didn't get any more complicated.

* * *

Maggie peered into the Chamber of the Moon. It looked identical to the Chamber of the Sun, a round room, about the same size. She tried to think what hints Balam might've left her. She didn't think he was trying to trick them, but he wasn't exactly forthcoming with information, either. He'd simply said the Chamber of the Moon was unsafe to enter. So what were they doing here? Were they crazy?

In spite of the warning and her own misgivings, she followed Indy and Archie into the room. What else could she do? *Go back* was the simple answer, but suddenly it was too late. They'd no sooner moved through the doorway when a stone barrier dropped down behind them. "No going back now," she murmured.

"Our weight must've triggered the door," Archie said. "I think we should spread out and work our way around the walls."

Indy moved to the right, while Archie went left. Both held torches. Maggie held her ground, not sure which way to proceed. When they were halfway around, the torches illuminated another doorway. A stone barrier was slowly lowering.

"It's closing," she shouted and charged across the room toward the opening. Big mistake!

Instantly, the walls shuddered, dust spilled down from the ceiling, caking her clothes and face. Cracks rippled across the floor, pieces of the ceiling were falling, the walls shuddered. The entire room was crumbling in on them and this time the gaps in the cracks on the floor were real. Maggie dodged her way across and bumped into Indy near the diminishing doorway.

"Ladies first."

"Kind of you, but you got here first."

"Hell, I'll go," Archie said and scrambled through.

Maggie started to follow him when a piece of the ceiling crashed down, striking Indy on the head and shoulders. He dropped to the

floor, onto his side, and the jade sphere rolled out of his pack.

Maggie scrambled after it, scooped it up, then grabbed Indy by the arm. “Crawl! Hurry! It’s closing down!”

He rolled over onto his hands and knees, but started in the wrong direction. As she turned him around, Indy seemed to snap out of his lethargy. He tugged her arm, pulling her toward the entrance.

“Go! Go!” he said.

This time she didn’t hesitate. She dove under the descending stone wall and Indy rolled through the doorway after her.

“That was close,” Archie gasped.

Indy shrugged. “Not that close.” He grinned, then patted his pack and the blood drained from his face. “The sphere! Where is it?” He lunged toward the doorway just as the stone wall slammed down.

“Hey, I got it.” Maggie handed it to him.

“Whew! That *was* close,” Indy admitted.

“How’s your head?” Maggie asked.

Indy took off his hat, touched a lump under his mussed hair. “It could use a little attention, right here.”

Maggie took a closer look. “You know, you’ve got a really hard head.”

“Ah, you two. In case you haven’t noticed, we’re in a new chamber,” Archie said.

Maggie caught herself, looked around. This room wasn’t round, square or rectangular. The walls and ceiling had multiple sides and flowed together so it was difficult to separate one from the other. The stone surfaces were smooth and slick.

“What is this place?” Indy asked.

“The Chamber of Venus,” Maggie said in a hushed voice. “It was built in honor of the underworld, and its traps were designed by ancient wizards. Balam said that the spirits of the chamber would steal your mind here, if you’re not careful.”

“Steal my mind?” Archie said. “I’m not sure there’s enough left of it to steal.”

“I don’t know what that means, either,” Indy said. “But I think we’re going to find out.”

“Now when you and the professor came here, did you encounter these difficulties?” Archie asked.

“We took a different route. We made our own entrance. We didn’t find any of these rooms.”

“You were lucky then, but you not so lucky now.”

“Yeah, you not so lucky, either,” Indy responded, mimicking Archie’s accent.

A long time ago, he’d concluded that Archie put on a Chinese accent, because sometimes he spoke perfect, unaccented English. He was born in San Francisco and lived his entire life there. When he’d asked Archie about it, he’d told him that he did it out of respect for his father, who always spoke with an accent. He never wanted to sound as if he were better than his father. He’d added: “Besides, Indy, my accent is what people, especially you Anglo-Americans, expect to hear from me. You think we are all Charlie Chans.”

Archie moved tentatively toward the center of the chamber, which was larger than the other two. “It’s an unusual chamber, but I see no traps. It is very clean.”

* * *

There was something different about the room, besides its shape, Maggie thought. It took her a moment to figure it out.

“Ah, gentlemen, there’s something missing here. There are no doorways. This looks like a dead-end. That’s the trap… or one of them.”

Her voice faded with the final words, her throat tightened. She blinked and struggled to understand what she was seeing. The walls of the room seemed to disappear and curtains of flames roared around her on every side. She turned in circles, confused, looking for a way out. She was alone now, trapped in the center of a ring of fire. The heat intensified, fed by air moving along the floor. The flames darted out, licking her, tasting her, preparing to consume her. Terrified that her clothes might catch fire at any moment, she hugged her arms to her body. Then a voice called out to her. Her mother.

“Maggie! Get out of the fire!”

“Mama! Where are you?”

The flames crackled and cackled, gleefully dancing around her. A spark, then another attacked her hair and she slapped her head.

“Maggie, run! Get away!”

“I can’t… fire, fire everywhere.”

She folded over, collapsing to the floor.

* * *

“Maggie, what the hell?”

Indy rushed to her side, but she didn’t respond. Her face was flushed, cheeks hot to the touch. Her eyes were wide open, but she didn’t see, at least not anything in the chamber. Her mouth hung slightly open as if she was sleeping, but her body was stiff.

“She’s not with us, Indy.”

“I can see that. I think we should…”

“What is it? What’s wrong, Indy?”

He felt dizzy, the chamber blurred. He stumbled, reached out for Archie, but his arm seemed to go right through him. Archie faded, Maggie was no longer there. He was in the chamber, alone. But now the light shifted. Instead of two flickering torches, he realized the chamber was lined with burning candles. The room felt warmer, stuffy, as if the candles were sucking the air into themselves, feeding the flames, and warming it at the same time. There was one gap in the circle of candles, where the outline of a door was now visible.

He moved toward it, pushed on it, but it didn’t move. What happened? Was he in a different chamber?

“Archie, Maggie, can you hear me?”

Abruptly, the stone filling the doorway lifted, revealing only darkness. Indy stepped back, uncertain what to do. A moment later, a young woman, tall, attractive, blonde, walked through the doorway. She smiled at him, held out her hands, palms turned up as if she expected him to reach for them.

“Who the hell are you? Where did you come from?” She was gorgeous, well proportioned, just his type. But he didn’t trust anything in this chamber. He felt light-headed, uneasy.

“I’m here for you, Indy.”

“Oh, yeah. What did you have in mind?”

She smiled alluringly, winked, then pointed to the floor behind him. He turned to see an array of cushions, pillows, bedding. It was all surrounded by another ring of softly burning candles.

“Where did that come from? This feels like a dream.”

The woman reached out, pinched his arm, then laughed when he cried out and rubbed it. Behind her, another woman, equally attractive, a dark-haired beauty, stepped into the chamber. Like the

first woman, she wore a sheer, white gown and the outline of her body was visible in the candlelight.

"Indy, take me," she whispered.

"Take us both," the other one said.

Indy cleared his throat. "I don't really know you and, besides, I'm with a couple of friends, who must be around here somewhere." He detected movement in the doorway and groaned as another gorgeous woman stepped into view, another blonde. Then a redhead followed, and both were garbed in the same gossamer gowns that accentuated their loveliness.

Indy groaned. He closed his eyes, rubbed his hands over his warm, moist forehead and cheeks, wondering if they'd all be gone when he looked again. But that wasn't the case. There were more… and more. They continued filing through and now the ones closest to him were stroking his arms and chest, whispering the same words over and over.

"Take me, take me first. Take all of us."

The room was now unbearably hot. Indy sweltered in the abundant show of affection. He couldn't see the doorway any longer, but the pressure of the bodies against him kept increasing. Hands stroked him, tugged at his clothes. The weight and density of the women forced him down to the cushions, and he knew they would suffocate him, that this was a death of his own making. Too much of a good thing could be as deadly as an assassin's bullet, a stab in the back, an arrow in the heart.

He gasped for breath as the bodies swelled around him. He called out for help and everyone wanted to help, and the pressure increased, and he was dying of affection. He was losing consciousness when a phrase came to mind, something he'd seen written above a doorway at the ruins of Delphi. *Everything in moderation.*

He gulped air, called on his remaining strength, squeezed his eyes shut, and shouted the phrase as loud as he could. Abruptly, the pressure seemed to ease. He said it again, firmly, but with no sense of panic in his voice: "Everything in moderation." Three simple words, but the effects were wondrous.

The women moved away, giving him space. The chamber walls and floor rippled around him. A gap opened above him and he felt as

if he were being lifted upward. But then hands were shaking him, holding him down. “Let me go. I told you, everything in moderation.”

“Indy, we’re trying to help you,” Archie said.

Indy blinked, looked around. The women and the candles were gone. Archie and Maggie were back. Or rather, he was back. “I almost died, unbelievable.”

“Same with us,” Maggie said. “We all experienced something horrible. Mine was fire, the way my parents died when I was just six.”

“Mine was scorpions,” Archie said. “This room full of deadly scorpions. Very terrible.”

“What was yours, Indy?” Maggie asked. “What did you say, ‘Everything in moderation?’ Was that it?”

“Oh, it was horrible, awful, too much.” He felt his face reddening. “It was very confusing.”

“But too much of what?” she asked.

Too much of everything, he thought. He shook his head. “I can’t talk about it now.”

She touched his arm, her fingertips cool where his skin still felt hot. She drew her nails lightly up his arm, teasing, promising. “I see. It was bad. But you need to talk about it, Indy.”

“This isn’t the time or place to talk. I’ve got a clue about how to get out of here.”

He stood up, noticed the lack of cushions and the raw, flickering light from the torches. He took one of them and approached the wall where the women had entered. He ran his fingertips over it, hunting for a crease, an indentation, the hint of an escape hatch. Nothing.

He shook his head. “We’re trapped in a trap.”

14
KINGSTON'S NOTES

He stared hopelessly at the smooth stone wall. No way out, trapped. He'd found the jade sphere, traveled into the depths of the Darién Jungle, and defied death to enter a hidden pyramid. But now Indy and his companions were cornered in a hexed chamber. Ancient Mayan shamans somehow had imprinted devious mental fireworks here that were triggered by anyone who made it this far into the pyramid.

After his experience, he might never look at another woman again. Well, at least not more than one at a time. He pushed away the disconcerting thought of being suffocated by too much of a good thing and returned to the matter at hand. What was the point of the expedition if it ended here? If they all died, his accomplishments thus far would be meaningless. He would let down his companions, himself, and Kingston's legacy—the reason for the journey.

There had to be a way out. He snapped his fingers as he realized he was overlooking the obvious. He spun around. "Maggie, Archie. Are you both still here with me, no mental confusion?"

"No more than normal," Archie said.

"I just realized that in my own confusion I've forgotten about the most important matter at hand."

“Which is what?” Maggie asked.

Indy reached into his pack. “The jade sphere, of course. Maybe it can provide some answers.”

He pulled out the leather pouch and uncovered the sphere. Cupping it in his hands, he moved to the center of the room. He wasn’t sure what he should do with it. He just stood quietly, staring at it, willing it to cough up its secrets, reveal its magic.

“Say something,” Archie suggested.

“Like what, *hello*? Or how about, *Get us out of here!*”

“Let me try,” Maggie said. “You’re not serious enough.”

“I am serious. I want out of here.”

As Maggie moved toward him, the walls rippled like Jell-O. The sphere suddenly took on weight and he was barely able to hang onto it. He gasped for breath, crumpled to his knees. He folded his arms over the sphere pulling it toward his belly. The air turned gelid and pale green and he realized that the sphere now filled the chamber and he was inside it. Yet, he also cradled it in his arms.

He peered out, but couldn’t see Maggie or Archie. Then the doorway reappeared, opened, and from the darkness Maggie appeared, and approached him. *Let me see, Indy*. *Let me see it*. She held out her arms, then another Maggie followed behind her, then another and another. The scenario was repeating itself, this time one woman with numerous copies, all reaching for him, for the sphere.

He struggled to hold onto it, then remembered how he’d gotten rid of the women. He shouted the three-word aphorism, but this time nothing happened. It was Maggie and Maggie, over and over again. In frustration, he yelled: “Get out! All of you! Get out of this room and take us with you!”

Suddenly, all the Maggies were chanting: *Take us with you… Take us with you.*

A nightmare. But Indy was determined. He stood up, still clutching the sphere, and headed toward the doorway. The Maggie crowd, now silent, all moved aside. He stepped into the darkness. The sphere was no longer heavy. He smelled dank earth and as his eyes adjusted, he glimpsed a stairway. He turned back and there was Maggie—just one of her—and Archie.

“You did it,” Archie said. “You got in.”

“How did you do it?” Maggie asked, a perplexed look on her face.

“With your help.”

“All I did was ask to see the sphere.”

“Yeah, over and over again.”

“You wouldn’t say anything,” she replied. “You were just staring at the wall. Then you got up and went right over here and there was the door.”

“We go now?” Archie asked.

“Yeah, we go.” Indy turned and started up the narrow stairway. The temperature seemed to drop with each step. The torches flickered behind him, creating a giant shadow above him. After a dozen steps, the stairs ended in a wall.

“I can’t go any farther.”

“That is no good,” said Archie, who brought up the rear. “There is no doorway behind me. It’s just not there.”

This time Indy didn’t hesitate. Holding the sphere in front of him, he walked toward the wall. “Open…open…open.”

As he neared the wall, he saw the shadow of a doorway. Maybe it had been there all along. Or maybe the sphere had opened it. It didn’t matter. He walked right through the opening and into another darkened space.

Seconds later, Maggie appeared with one of the torches and illuminated an enormous round chamber. She gasped. “It’s the Astral Chamber.”

The chamber was bowl-shaped with an assortment of Mayan statuary spaced throughout. A series of mysterious grooved rings circled the stone floor. “It doesn’t exactly look like a planetarium.”

“It’s not. Belam said you have to get to the bottom of the Astral Chamber to reach the planetarium.”

She had a knack for gathering information, Indy thought. There was something about her that suggested she was more than a renowned photographer. But it wasn’t the time to pursue that matter. “I hope he’s right. That’s where I want to go. But how do we get there?”

“I wonder why those channels were carved in the floor?” Archie asked.

“Oh, they were probably filled with water for ceremonies.” Indy stuffed the jade sphere back into his pack. “That’s an educated guess.”

A deep rumbling seemed to start beneath them, then it traveled in undulating waves, getting louder and louder until the room seemed

to vibrate. *Another trap*. The rumbling grew thunderous, a storm bearing down on them, and now he felt the floor quaking, heaving, like a giant in pain. With a kind of mounting horror, he realized they'd stepped into an enormous trap.

Huge boulders weighing tons now hurtled along the channels, picking up speed, and one rolled rapidly toward them. He grabbed Maggie's arm, yanked her out of the way. Another enormous boulder scraped the sleeve of his jacket and he jumped back.

"Archie, where are you?" he shouted.

"Against the wall. I'm staying here, thank you."

Indy tugged on Maggie's hand. "C'mon. Let's keep moving."

They darted past another boulder, then another and another as they made their way toward the bottom of the bowl-shaped chamber. He glanced at Maggie, grinned. "It's not so hard.

"Watch out!" she shouted.

The next boulder clipped a tall stone Mayan statue and it toppled forward, crashing to the floor, and missed them by a couple of feet. They lunged forward, working their way closer. Another statue crashed right in their path. They veered around it and finally reached the center of the bowl. The boulders disappeared one after another into a pit at the bottom of the bowl.

"Is it safe?" Archie called out from the rim.

"Probably not," Indy answered. "But we might find a way out."

"I am on my way. Wait for me."

Maggie held out the torch and pointed down. He saw steps carved into the sloping base of the bowl that led into the hole at the center. As Archie joined them, Indy took the lead and descended the steep steps toward the black hole. It looked like a dead end, the resting place of a pile of boulders, and if one more rolled this way they would be crushed and buried.

At the thought of that possibility, he picked up the pace. But two steps later, his feet slipped out from under him, and he slid down a few steps before he caught himself.

"You okay?" Maggie called out.

"Yeah, I just decided to walk on my butt for a while." He rubbed his backside as he stood up.

"It can't be much farther," she assured him.

He hoped she was right. The steps spiraled down steeply into the depths, and all he could see in front of him was wall . The torches

barely illuminated one or two steps.

"You would think a planetarium would be up the steps, not down," Archie said from the rear.

"You would think," Indy said.

Suddenly, the light wavered, Maggie shrieked, stumbled. He turned and caught her, held her, her face inches from his. He held her gaze. "Gotcha."

"Thank you. The steps are slippery."

"Ah, can we keep going?" Archie sounded impatient.

"Yeah, sure." He reluctantly released Maggie and continued down the stairs. He moved faster now, anxious to get somewhere, and lost the torch lighting. Suddenly, there were no steps, and he was walking on a flat floor.

"Indy, I can't see you," Maggie shouted.

"I'm here… wherever this is."

"Don't move. Just wait for us," Archie yelled.

"I'm waiting." Torchlight filtered down the stairway, growing brighter. He sucked in his breath as he saw his boots hanging slightly over the edge of an abyss. He moved back a couple of steps, and stayed put. When Maggie arrived, he took the torch from her. "Watch your step."

He bent down, picked up a loose stone and flipped it into the hole. A couple seconds later, he heard a plunk as it struck water. "It's a well, a cenote. A perfect place for sacrifices."

"And accidents," she added.

He raised the torch for a better view of his surroundings. He found himself in a chamber with curving walls and a domed ceiling, all covered with carvings.

"Did you say there's another way out?" Archie asked, joining them.

"Another educated guess. But we've got business to attend to before we leave."

With that, Indy walked around the well that was about six feet across, toward the center of the chamber where a pedestal with a bowl-shaped top was perched. He took out the jade sphere and lowered it into the stone bowl. "A perfect fit."

"Now what?" Maggie asked.

"I don't know, can't even guess."

As he spoke, the sphere started to glow, the light gradually intensifying. Indy stepped back as the dome was illuminated and the strange writing turned luminous and green. Light emanated from the base of the pedestal and up through the jade sphere. He stepped up and snatched the sphere from the base.

"What are you doing?" Maggie asked.

"Just trying to figure out how this works. Okay, it's getting light outside and there's a mirror at the base of the pedestal that's reflecting the morning light and shining it up through the sphere."

Archie took renewed interest. "The light enters through a hole. You think it's big enough to crawl through?"

"If you're a snake, maybe," Indy answered as he placed the sphere back on the pedestal.

"But how would that light illuminate the writing on the dome?" Maggie asked. "It looks like it's glowing."

"It's biological, actually," Indy said. "There's a type of rainforest fungus that has bio-luminescent properties. You can't see it in normal daylight. But when it's filtered through the jade sphere, it glows bright green. The spores of the fungus probably migrated through that hole from the outside. Or the Mayans might've intentionally covered the dome with the pigment from the fungus and it just kept growing."

"What does it have to do with Professor Kingston's notes?" Archie asked.

"Good question." Indy adjusted the sphere, feeling the symbols etched into its surface as he turned it. He stopped when he reached an indentation. The ball of his thumb fit perfectly into it as if it were a miniature bowling ball. He moved the indentation to the top and abruptly the dome shifted. The Mayan script vanished, replaced by a text in English.

"Look! That must be it, Charles Kingston's notes."

As his eyes adjusted to the green letters, he began reading.

Hello my friends --

You have activated the jade sphere, which is an astonishingly sophisticated mathematical computational system. When placed at the center of the Temple of the Cosmos, it is energized through a means that is beyond our comprehension. But after years of study, I

am convinced that the energy emanates from a power source in the Pleiades.

This temple was placed in this god-forsaken environment, distant from other Mayan sites, so that its knowledge could be preserved until a time when mankind could fully understand it. That time might not come about until my children's children come of age. For that reason, I trust that you will maintain the secrecy that I have so carefully nurtured. When the time comes, this great planetarium and vast calendar will be revealed to the world in ways we don't comprehend at this time.

The planetarium is not only keyed to the movement of planets. It's also a metaphysical map that records how spiritual time flows.

Some might consider it an abomination to make use of a sacred calendar for the purpose of searching for an artifact of another culture. But the fact that I am able to pursue this purpose reveals that the Mayan perspective is not unique to its own culture, that it is geared to universal wisdom. Of course, we don't know what links between distant cultures might have existed in the ancient world. Certainly, if there were such links, they would involve the use of sacred artifacts that allowed the priests to move beyond the ordinary world into the extraordinary. With that introduction, you now can read my notes.

Indy read the message twice and as he finished for the second time, the dome shifted again and Kingston's notes on the Staff of Moses appeared. He quickly verified that Kingston was searching for the Staff of Moses. He took out a notebook and started jotting down everything he could read. Maggie, meanwhile, started photographing the dome.

"If I'm going to continue this search, it looks like I need to go to Istanbul," he told her.

"What do you mean 'if'? You've got to go after the staff. You can't let the Nazis get their hands on it."

Her heartfelt enthusiasm surprised him. He sensed once again that she was more than an accidental companion along for the adventure and a few snapshots. But where did she place her loyalties? he wondered.

"Maggie, there's something I've been meaning to ask you."

She lowered her camera, set it in her bag, and looked around. “Hey, where is Archie?”

Indy scanned the planetarium. “I don’t know.”

“What’s over there, a door?” she asked.

Indy took a few steps toward a dark rectangular area. He heard voices. “Archie?”

The one-eyed Chinaman stepped through the doorway. His hat was askew. “I found the other way out, but…”

He moved stiffly and Indy quickly saw why.

“Hello again, Jonesy!” Magnus Völler, gun in hand, pushed Archie forward. Several muscular Brown Shirt colleagues, armed and flushed, as if fresh from a kill, followed the German archaeologist. “Did you think you would lose me so easily?”

“You and I stick together like thunder and lightning, Magnus. You rumble after I strike.”

“Clever, Jones. But now I’m striking while the iron’s hot.” He looked as if he were about to fire the gun into the dome when he saw the writing. He stared in amazement, the weapon still pointing upward.

“Sorry, Magnus. I don’t have time for your clichés, or your master race theories. You’re not going to find any hidden Aryan race here. So why don’t you go home.”

“I will go home, but only when I have the Staff of Moses in my possession.”

“You won’t find it here. Not even close.”

Völler laughed. “You don’t fool me, Jones. I see the directions all over the ceiling.” He pointed his revolver at Indy. “Spare me the time and bother. Give me your notes.”

“Then what, you let us go on our way? I don’t think so.” He hated what he had to do, but there was no choice. He needed to block Völler from copying Kingston’s notes. With that, he snatched the jade sphere from the pedestal and smashed it against the stone floor. The pieces showered around him. He reached down, grabbed Maggie’s camera bag and jammed it into the pedestal bowl, blocking the light.

As the room sank into darkness, Indy pulled Maggie and Archie to the floor and they scrambled on hands and knees toward the door. Völler raged, shouting at him, firing his weapon. He heard one of the Nazis groan and drop to the floor. They had a way of shooting their

own, Indy thought as he found the doorway and steps leading up. As soon as all three had climbed down, Archie slammed his fist into a protruding rock and a stone slab slid across the opening.

"Völler made a mistake," Archie said, proudly. "He showed me how he opened it."

"My camera!" Maggie gasped. "We've got to go back. It's got all the photos of the dome."

Indy took her arm. "Leave it. I've got notes. We're okay."

"But it's my camera."

"You want to die for a camera? I don't think so. I'll buy you a new one… maybe."

They scaled the stone stairs that led to a narrow opening in the pyramid wall. Corridors split off on either side, and Indy recognized it as the entrance Kingston had used. They climbed out into the morning light near the chief's throne.

When Indy's eyes adjusted, he started to see bodies. Several ghost people lay dead in the open area near the pyramid. Maggie rushed over to a fallen warrior. "It's Belam. He's still alive."

Indy joined her and he could see from the bullet wound that Belam wouldn't survive for long. Maggie took his hand and leaned close as Belam spoke in a barely audible voice. "He says they killed many warriors, but the chief and the Great Mother escaped."

Belam tugged on her arm and she listened again. "He says a motor-bird circled the pyramid after the slaughter and landed on the water when the sun rose."

"That's the pontoon plane," Archie said. "Let's get it before the Nazis get out."

"Can't we help him?" Maggie said. As she spoke, Belam's head slumped to the side. He took one more ragged breath and died.

"Nothing we can do now," Indy said.

They hurried into the forest following a path, but it quickly divided. "Belam pointed in this direction, but I don't know which path goes to the river."

"I do."

They turned to see the old woman—the Great Mother—emerge from the jungle, machete in hand. "Flora!" Indy said.

"Lost again?"

"Not yet. Give us a chance," Indy responded.

“Can you show us the way to the river?” Maggie asked. “You can escape with us.”

“I live here and I will stay here. You take the airplane away so the warriors can avenge the deaths of their brothers.” Flora pointed to the trail leading to the right. “When it breaks into two again, go left. That will take you to the river.” She handed her machete to Indy. “But first cut branches to hide your trail. Then do the same when you reach the next turn.”

With that, she was gone.

Indy quickly trimmed the jungle branches, and moved limbs across their path. Archie dragged a rotting log, and Maggie rearranged the branches so they looked like the surrounding growth.

“Looks good,” Indy said, wiping the sap off his hands. “Let’s move on before Völler turns up.”

Indy was about to head down the trail when a mushy purple fruit the size of a cantaloupe struck him on the shoulder. Then another splattered on Archie’s boot. A family of howler monkeys shook their arms and bared their teeth.

“I don’t think they approve of our work,” Maggie said, wiping off Indy’s shoulder with a kerchief.

“I don’t approve of their behavior, either.” He licked his purple finger. “They’re wasting good fruit.”

One of the monkeys let out a yelp and they all scattered. “Down!” Indy hissed as he heard an exchange of German.

Seconds later, Völler and his men barreled down the path. Völler hesitated a moment, as if sensing something was wrong, but continued on in the wrong direction. “That was close,” Maggie said, getting up.

“Run!” Indy snapped, and the three fled down the trail. But Indy knew that Völler wouldn’t be fooled for long. Twenty minutes later, out of breath, they reached the next split in the trail.

“I don’t know if I can go another step, Indy,” Archie said. “Exhausted, very much exhausted.”

“Yeah, well we’re running for our lives,” Indy answered as he hacked at the underbrush with the machete.

“Sit down and rest,” Maggie said. “Watch the trail for any sign of you-know-who. Indy and I will cover the trail.”

A few minutes later, they’d created another verdant barrier. “Can you make it, Archie?” he asked.

“I’m much better. I needed to rest.”

“Let’s go.”

When they finally arrived at the river, they followed the bank until they spotted the seaplane. The pilot had lashed the plane to a tree and was sitting on the bank fishing.

Indy slashed at a thick vine hanging from a tree. He cut two pieces from it. “Okay, both of you, put your hands behind your backs. I’m going to tie you up. You’re my prisoners.”

“Sure, on one condition,” Maggie said.

“What’s that?” he asked as he finished tying her hands and moved to Archie.

“I’m going to Istanbul with you.”

Interesting, he thought. “I suppose that could be arranged.”

Indy finished by tying the two together with a long piece of vine around their waists. Wielding the machete, he led them toward the pilot. *“Hey! Kumpel! Guten Morgen!”*

The bearded pilot dropped his makeshift fishing pole, and turned to Indy. “I told you guys I don’t speak your lingo. So stop trying it on me.” He looked bleary-eyed, bored. But his expression shifted to suspicion when he saw Maggie and Archie.

“Hey, I don’t remember nothing about transporting no chink or broad. Who the hell are they?”

Indy remembered Jacques mentioning the pilot’s name. “Herr McNulty. I come with orders from Herr Professor Völler for you to fly these two prisoners and myself to Cana immediately,” Indy said, using his best German accent.

“I wish you people would quit changing your minds. Völler told me to wait for him.”

“New plans. We go now.”

Indy heard a branch crack. He shifted his gaze, spotted a tall, skinny man with a rifle—Sudao, the pillager they’d encountered.

“Hola, amigos!” Sudao grinned. *“Encontramos otra vez.”*

“Yeah, nice to see you again, too,” Indy said.

Sudao jabbed the rifle at Indy. “Drop the machete.”

Indy did as he was told. His hand slipped to his belt as Sudao shifted his attention to Maggie and Archie. Puzzled by the bindings around their wrists and waist, he stepped closer.

Indy loosened his whip and lashed it around Sudao’s neck. The rifle fell from his hand. Indy snagged it and turned on the pillager.

“This man is an imposter,” he told McNulty. “He’s a *guaquero*, not a Nazi.”

“Yeah, but he paid me. That’s Nazi enough for me.”

“And I’m paying you, too. But we’ve got to leave right now.”

McNulty scratched his beard, assessing the situation. “Where’s the money?”

“Right here,” Indy said and reached into Archie’s pack. He pulled out a stack of bills.

“The pilot’s eyes widened. “Let’s go! The more Nazis the merrier.”

“Not so fast. Drop the rifle, Jones.”

Indy turned to see Völler aiming his revolver. “You again,” he muttered. Sudao snagged the rifle from Indy’s hands.

“He tricked me with his whip,” Sudao said.

“Shut up! You incompetent fool.” Völler was flushed, dripping with sweat, out of breath. But he quickly recovered as two of his Gestapo agents caught up. He snapped his fingers at one of the agents, muttered under his breath in German. The agent stepped forward and shot Sudao in the head.

“He was useless,” Völler said.

“You’re a heartless killer,” Maggie shouted.

Völler smiled. “You’ll make tasty bait for the caimans in the river. Since you’re all tied up so cleverly, I might just let you drown to save bullets.”

“Let her go, Völler. She’s just a photographer.”

“Not true, Jones. Not true at all.”

“You’ve got her camera bag. Take a look.”

“Miss Maggie O’Malley is an agent for British Intelligence, Section D, I believe.”

“Never heard of it,” Indy said.

“They conduct covert political actions and paramilitary operations.” He bowed to Maggie. “Good work, Miss O’Malley, but unfortunately for you, there’s a double agent in your section.”

He raised his revolver to Indy’s head. “Enough talk. I’ve been waiting a long time for this moment, Jones. Your colleagues and students will never know what happened to you.”

One of the Gestapo agents gasped, fell forward, an arrow protruding from his back. Two more arrows struck the other agent, who stumbled and fell.

Indy knocked Völler's arm away, tackled him, and they splashed into the river, sank, surfaced, still locked together. When they surfaced again, Indy grabbed Völler by the collar and belted him in the jaw. Völler fell back, then slammed a boot into Indy's chest, shoving him away. Indy surfaced, looked around for Völler, expecting him to surge out of the water at any moment. He struggled against the current to maintain his balance as he waited. Völler never resurfaced.

On shore, several warriors, their bodies painted white, stood over the dead agents. Flora, the Great Mother, looked on. "Thanks," Indy called. "We needed a little help."

Flora motioned with a hand for them to leave. "Now go before the arrows come flying at you."

Indy quickly freed Maggie and Archie from the vines with a couple slashes of his knife. They scrambled aboard the plane as McNulty untied it and started the engine. "I don't know what any of that was about, and I don't want to know," McNulty shouted above the engine.

They taxied down the river, lifted off, then circled around. Indy, sitting in the back seat with Maggie, waved at Flora and the ghost people. As they followed the river just above the treetops, the pilot peered down, dipping his wing. Indy pressed his forehead against the window as he spotted a crumpled figure climbing out of the water.

"I guess we won't be seeing any more of Dr. Völler," Archie called out above the roar of the engine.

"At least not today," Indy shouted back. He turned to Maggie, leaned toward her ear. "Is it true what he said about you?"

She hesitated before answering. "I'm sorry. I couldn't tell you. Will you still take me to Istanbul?"

"I'll consider it." After a few moments, he leaned closer. "Since you're not working for the Nazis, I suppose I could use some company."

Archie looked back, caught their attention, then yelled. "Do you think this plane could fly to San Francisco?"

"You paid him enough. He might just do it."

Istanbul

You must find the shepherd to guide you to the staff. Look for it in Istanbul in the Sultan's Palace. Find the curator and ask for directions to the shepherd's chamber. Keep in mind that the chamber is under pressure.

—from Charles Kingston's notes

15
THE SULTAN'S BALL

By the time they arrived at the Sultan's Palace, everything had been arranged. Thanks to Marcus Brody, Indy would gain access to the 'off-limits' areas of the sprawling palace. Once the home of Istanbul's royal family, it was now an historical site and museum. Brody, good friends of the curator of the palace, had wired ahead to make the necessary arrangements. But as in many international dealings involving museums, there was a formality to follow. Indy and Maggie had been invited to the Sultan's Ball at the palace. These grand social events provided Turkey's leaders an opportunity to impress and curry favors.

Indy was aware of the entire scenario so he and Maggie had upgraded their wardrobe for the evening soirée. Indy wore a white dinner jacket with black bow tie and black formal pants. Maggie's emerald gold evening gown featured a silver and gold metallic bodice with dramatic puffed sleeves, a bare back. The ankle-length velvet skirt included silver and gold lamé panels. Indy had stared at the ample price tag as the French saleswoman had described it in detail. She touched Indy's arm and whispered, "Your lady will look absolutely stunning, and very sexy, too."

And indeed she did, he thought, watching as they stepped from a 1925 Rolls-Royce Phantom limousine and entered the front gate of the palace. They were ushered along a plush red carpet into a magnificent hall with ornate gold trim, portraits from Turkey's grand past, and ancient statuary. They moved into the marble-floored ballroom, mingling with guests, and quickly realized they were attending the social event of the year. Dignitaries from more than two dozen countries were in attendance.

Indy inquired about the museum curator, Mustafa Kazak, but none of the Turks he spoke to seemed to know his whereabouts. That was odd, Indy thought, since Kazak was very interested in meeting Indy and Maggie at the ball. He and Maggie moved to the dance floor, and as they waltzed about the room, Indy realized he should be looking for Kazak rather than dancing. Kingston's notes had led him to the palace and had indicated with a certainty that the museum director could point him to the Shepherd's cavern, his next stop. But where was Kazak?

As the waltz ended, Indy told Maggie he wanted to look around. "It's best I do this on my own. You attract too much attention." He'd noticed more than one man turning his attention toward the attractive redhead.

"Don't worry. I can occupy myself," she said.

Indy knew that Maggie had her own agenda, and that was fine as long as they were on the same side working against the interests of Nazi treasure hunters. He moved deeper into the palace, arrived at a large atrium with glass dome and a fountain in the center. Several people from the party were strolling about. Indy quickly walked over to the fountain when he spotted a couple of tall blond men. He worked his way around the fountain until he found a good spot to observe them. They definitely looked more like Germans than Turks, and they were standing in front of oversized mahogany double-doors with intricate carvings etched into the surface. Above the doors, the sign in English, French and Turkish indicated that the doors led into the national museum.

Trouble, Indy thought. More Gestapo, he guessed, and they were guarding the entrance. No wonder he hadn't found the museum director. Time for action.

He retreated from the atrium and slipped outside to the car park where his rented limousine waited. As he walked toward it, he

noticed a Mercedes limousine with a triangle of swastika flags mounted on the hood. Opening the trunk, he found his luggage and slipped his Webley pocket revolver inside his coat. Then he rolled up his whip and stuck it into a leather case. He sorted through a collection of odds and ends, selected a knife and a couple of other useful tools, and dropped them into the case. At the last moment, he reached into his luggage and removed his passport and money. Best to have it with him, just in case they needed to flee.

He avoided the main entrance this time and skirted along the palace until he approached a modest door near the rear of the building. He tried the handle. Locked, of course. He took out a wire he'd picked from his supplies and worked the lock. Half a minute later, the lock clicked open. He stepped into the darkness, listened, lit a match. He was standing inside a janitorial closet. Cautiously, he opened the door on the far side of the room. He found himself in a majestic hall that was dimly lit. Indy could see that it housed an array of treasures from Turkey's glorious past.

He'd like to spend some time here examining the artifacts, but it was hardly the time for that pursuit. However, when he noticed a display of helmets and shields that were labeled as artifacts of Troy, Indy couldn't help taking a second look. They were probably excavated in the 1870s by Heinrich Schliemann, a German entrepreneur, who stole more than 9,000 gold ornaments from the Troy site. Schliemann eventually was pressured to compensate Turkey, and these artifacts were probably part of that deal. The best ones no doubt remained in Berlin with Hitler's regime and under Völler's control. The display didn't mention the controversy, or the fact that Schliemann probably excavated Troy II, a city built on top of the site of famed Troy of Homer's *Iliad*.

Indy's ponderings were interrupted by a muffled shout. He crouched, crept forward, then heard the voice again, closer this time. Light spilled from under a door. He was about to approach the door when he heard a shuffling sound and realized that a guard stood in the shadows near the door.

Indy strode up to the man. "What is the meaning of all this noise and rowdiness? This is a museum, not a tavern."

The guard was stunned. "How did *you* get in here?" he asked in a thick German accent.

“I belong here. The question is, how did you get in here?” Indy pointed at the door. “You go in there right now and tell them to pipe it down. I’m doing serious research this evening.”

The guard hesitated, turned toward the door, and Indy cold-cocked him with the butt of his gun. He hurriedly stripped off the guard’s uniform, which was a size or two larger than his own apparel. He took off his white dress jacket and bow tie, rolled up the jacket and stuffed it into his carrying case. Then he quickly donned the uniform over his pants and shirt. Finally, before entering the room, he dragged the body away from the door and behind a counter.

Indy slowly turned the knob on the door and peeked inside. It was a library, the walls stacked to the ceiling with books. At first glance, it appeared as if he were interrupting a formal gathering. A balding man with a thick drooping mustache wore tails and was slumped in a straight-back chair in the center of the room. Three men wearing dress uniforms stood nearby. Indy quickly saw that the seated man was bound to the chair. His bow tie was askew and a thin trail of blood rolled down his chin.

One of the uniformed men hovered over him. “What are you holding back from me?” he bellowed.

The man in the chair raised his head as Indy walked into the room. The interrogator, a tall, broad-shouldered man with a jagged scar across his jaw, spun on his heels. The other two raised their weapons.

Indy waved a hand, told the Nazis to get lost. *“Bis spatter. Verstehen Sie?* Do you understand? I’m taking over here.”

The interrogator demanded to know where Indy was from. *“Woher kommst du?”*

“From the *Vertieidigung germanisches*, American chapter. Sent here by Herr Professor Magnus Völler. My English is better than yours. Now get out!”

“But you need help.”

“No, I’m going to use reason, not shouting and slapping.” He jabbed his finger at the door. *“Auf Wiedersehen!”*

“I will see about this!” The interrogator led his two cronies out of the library. But a moment later, he opened the door again. “***Wo ist Wolf****?*”

Indy was momentarily at a loss. *Where is the wolf?* “Ah, Wolfgang. I sent him to the entrance with the others.”

As soon as the door closed, Indy locked it, then turned to the bound man. “Mustafa Kazak, I presume.”

He didn’t answer.

“I’m Dr. Jones, friend of Marcus Brody.”

“How do I know that? You’re wearing one of their uniforms.”

In answer, Indy took out his knife and slashed the blade down the front of the uniform, snapping off the buttons. He ripped off the shirt and pants to reveal his own garb, then cut the rope that bound Kazak’s wrists. “Convinced?”

“I believe so.”

“We need to talk, Dr. Kazak. But not here. They’ll be back soon. We’ve got to get out.”

Indy helped Kazak to his feet, but pounding erupted at the door.

“Guess we weren’t fast enough.”

* * *

Maggie strolled through the crowd gathered near the bar, listening to tidbits of conversation, joining in from time to time, then moving on before anyone could ask too many questions of her. To avoid raising suspicions, she stopped asking about the museum curator. It was apparent he wasn’t here and anyone who knew his whereabouts probably wasn’t talking.

She enjoyed the spectacle of the ball, but truth be told, she would rather be with Indy, prowling the back rooms of the palace and museum, searching for the curator. Prior to their arrival at the ball, Maggie wired her latest report to her superiors and had asked for information on Mustafa Kazak. Earlier today she’d received the answer she was hoping for. Kazak opposed the Nazis because they were obsessive collectors of artifacts and didn’t care how they obtained them. Much like earlier collectors from the same homeland. Turkish archaeologists and antiquity protectors, such as himself, had never healed their differences with the Germans over the theft of thousands of artifacts in the late nineteenth century.

Kazak was also a mystic fascinated with Biblical artifacts and that was his connection with Kingston. He could be quite contrary, the report said. *Expect limited cooperation unless you can prove your worth to him.* What did that mean? she wondered.

A tap on her shoulder broke her train of thought. “May I have this dance, Miss O’Malley?”

At first, she thought it was Indy feigning a stiff German accent. She turned, smiling. The tall blond man wore a black tuxedo with tails. Magnus Völler. She covered her surprise by looking out at the dance floor. “It’s kind of crowded.”

“Oh, please. I insist.”

“What are you going to do, step on my feet and eject poison darts from your shoes?”

“I wouldn’t think of it. I would never hurt such a beautiful and intelligent woman. But we do have some business to attend to while we dance.”

As he led her onto the dance floor, she scanned the crowd for Indy. No sign of him.

“My men are keeping Dr. Jones busy, I’m sure. Just relax. That’s the best way to dance, I’m told.”

Her exuberance plummeted with the touch of Völler’s hand on her back. The gala event was quickly descending into darkness, as was their plan to meet with the museum curator. Everything was getting complicated again. And the night was just beginning.

* * *

One of the Gestapo agents threw his body against the door and the frame shuddered. He did it again and again. Indy knew the door wouldn’t hold much longer. “Is there any other way out of here?”

“Yes, but I haven’t used it for so long,” Kazak said.

The doorframe cracked as the agent crashed into it again. “I think it’s time to use it.”

Kazak stepped over to one of the bookcases, pulled a thick book from the end of one of the shelves and pressed a hidden button. Nothing happened. He tried again with no luck. He shook his head. “That’s what I was afraid would happen.”

Indy glanced toward the door as he heard a sharp splintering of wood. He reached over Kazak’s shoulder and slammed the side of his fist against the button. The shelf groaned, then slowly revolved inward. They ducked out of sight into a darkened room. As the bookcase closed behind them, the library door crashed to the floor.

Feet pounded into the library, voices shouted. Books were pulled from shelves. “This way,” Kazak whispered.

Indy lit a match and saw Kazak directing him toward a staircase. “There are tunnels under the palace. We can escape.”

They took the stairs, then abruptly stopped. Indy lit another match. A gate with a lock blocked their way. “I guess we could go back after they leave,” Indy said.

Kazak shook his head. “No, it only opens from the library side.”

“So we’re stuck?”

“I believe so, unless they find the button on the bookcase.”

“Yeah, then we’re dead.”

* * *

They moved out onto the dance floor and Maggie asked what Völler was doing here.

“You get right to the point. I like that. But I thought you would ask how I got out of the jungle.”

“I already know the answer. The pilot went back for you.” It was a guess, but she’d seen it coming. The pilot, as well as Indy, had spotted the Nazi swimming ashore.

“Then you should know that I’m here for the same reason as you. We are on the path of the Staff of Moses.”

“Dr. Jones is the archaeologist. I’m just a magazine photographer.”

He laughed. “A good cover story.”

“But how did you know to come here? We were careful to hide our identities in our travel here.”

“I didn’t need to follow you. I got all the answers I needed from your camera. You were very thoughtful to photograph Kingston’s journal.”

Völler didn’t miss a trick, she thought. He was intelligent and motivated. And extremely dangerous. She knew that he could kill her right on the dance floor and disappear. She wondered what was stopping him.

As if reading her thoughts, he said: “I need you alive so I can control Jones. He’s not going to do anything to endanger your life.”

“Don’t count on it. He left me here for you to find.”

“Decidedly, a poor decision on his part.”

“I can handle myself. You’re being watched right now, by the way. At least three parties are keeping an eye on you.”

Völler gave her an amused look. “I thought it was all just one big party.”

Maggie stared into the German’s steely cold eyes. “You won’t be laughing if anything happens to me.”

“You’re bluffing.”

“Am I?”

He slid a hand over the back of her neck and she felt a chill, as if his fingertips were capable of freezing whatever they touched. We intercepted your communiqué. We know you’re on your own. It’s you and Jones, and he’s presently indisposed. Who knows what has happened to him by now.”

“Well, I think I’ll go look for him. Thanks for the dance.”

“Not so fast, Miss O’Malley. Suddenly, men in dress uniforms surrounded her, leaving her nowhere to turn. Völler leaned forward, touched her shoulder, and whispered in her ear. “Please go quietly. If you scream, you’ll be injected with a knockout drug.”

She believed him. The men escorted her away.

16
THE LAST HAREM

The thump of books hitting the floor suggested that the Gestapo agents suspected a hidden door. Indy lit another match and examined the lock on the gate. “Maybe I can get it open.” He handed the matches to Kazak and reached for the wire he’d used to pick the lock on the door to the museum. Indy fumbled with the wire, struggling to find the hole in the dim, flickering light.

“It would be easier to use a key,” Kazak replied.

“I’m sure it would. You got one?”

“Wait. I remember something.” Kazak struck a match, held it overhead. “My eyes are not so good.”

Indy spotted a key hanging from a hook near the ceiling. He reached up and pulled it down. The pounding of books against the floor continued as he tried to force the key into the lock. “I can’t believe it. It’s not the right key.”

“Let me try.” Kazak manipulated the key, and after a moment it slid into the lock. He unlocked the gate, pocketing the key. “You have to know how to work Turkish locks. Very sensitive sometimes.”

“I guess.”

Kazak reached through the gate and snapped the lock closed. “In case they find their way here.”

“Good idea.”

Indy found a lantern hanging on the wall and as he lit it asked Kazak about the interrogation. “Did they hurt you?”

The curator wiped his blood from his chin and touched his nose. “Maybe they broke my nose. Could have been worse.”

“Yeah, I know. Did you tell them anything?”

“They are looking for the shepherd, same as you.”

“Yeah, that’s what Professor Kingston said we would find here at the palace.” Indy held up the lantern. “Can you show me where it is?”

“The Germans cannot beat the location out of me and you cannot win it on the basis of knowing my colleagues Charles Kingston and Marcus Brody.”

“What do I need then?” Indy asked as they headed down the underground corridor.

“You must be worthy.”

He’d heard that qualification more than once in his search for sacred objects. But he was never certain what it meant. “How so?”

“You must prove that you are capable of handling the shepherd. If not, it would be useless in your care.”

“Okay. What exactly is the shepherd?”

“It’s not for me to say. It’s for you to find. But I can say that the shepherd will lead you to the staff.”

“Ah, Dr. Kazak. If you know where it is, you should tell me. We’re in a dangerous situation here, as you know. It’s also an important mission. I don’t think either of us wants the Staff of Moses to fall into the hands of the Nazis.”

“Of course not. If you’re worthy, you’ll find the shepherd.”

Indy looked exasperated. “You mean, you laid out clues for me to find, like some kind of party game?”

“No, no. You don’t understand. I placed no clues. It’s not like that. But the clues will appear to you, if you are aware, and that’s how you will prove yourself worthy.”

“So you don’t even know what the clues are.”

“Of course not. It’s your game. I mean, your challenge. But I can suggest where you can start, since I’m leading you in your escape.”

“That might help.” There was no time to argue, Indy thought. Just get moving.

“Take the passage to the left, then the steps. That will take you right into the Sultan’s Harem.”

“His harem? Oh, you mean, where it used to be.”

“Yes, it’s not widely known, but the Sultan’s harem is still maintained. Out of respect and tradition. In the past, the harem women were politically powerful and the last remnants of that power has kept the tradition alive.”

“What is the situation now?”

“Go see for yourself. Keep your eyes open and follow the lead that appears to you. Good luck!” Kazak turned away.

“Hey, aren’t you coming?”

“I’m taking a different route. I’m not welcome in the harem. They would not appreciate my appearance.”

“Oh, that’s good to know,” Indy said as Kazak disappeared around a corner.

Indy climbed the steps and pushed on a trap door. A fountain large enough to double as a swimming pool was visible as were several pillars. He couldn’t see anyone. He climbed up into a spacious, covered courtyard, illuminated by lanterns, and the light softened everything. He moved quickly to the nearest pillar. He couldn’t help feeling somewhat disappointed at not discovering a harem with dozens of young women bathing and relaxing in various stages of undress, served plates of fruit by bald black eunuchs. That classic image of harem life. Maybe they went to bed early.

He could hear voices, laughter emanating from a domed building inside the courtyard. Or maybe it was just the bubbling of the fountain and his imagination. He moved from pillar to pillar, paused, listened again.

“Are you lost, sir?”

He turned to see a woman wearing a loose garment and holding a veil in place. “Maybe so. I was looking for the shepherd’s chamber.”

“Then you’re looking in the wrong place. There is no such chamber here.”

In spite of the covering, Indy could tell the woman was elderly, probably the queen mother of the harem. “Do you know where I can find it?”

“No, I don’t. But maybe we can help you. Come with me.”

She led him across the marble floored courtyard to a domed building. Its walls were ornately carved and the open doorway was vaguely shaped like a large person with a flowing gown. The interior, Indy could tell, once had been luxurious, but had fallen into

disrepair. A dozen women were gathered here, some at a long table, others on divans.

"Kadin, who is this young man, our new eunuch?" a woman called out.

They all looked his way and laughed. They were unveiled and, thankfully, fully clothed. To Indy's astonishment, without exception, they were elderly. Not a young nubile concubine among them. Distracted, he couldn't help himself. "Where are the eunuchs and the rest of the harem?"

Kadin, the elderly woman who had led him here, dropped her veil.

She ignored his comment. "It's 1939, not 1639. The Byzantine world and the Ottoman Empire were long gone. The last sultan, Mehmed VI Vaudettin, left Turkey seventeen years ago. We are the last of the harem's concubines and odalisques."

"Of course. But I'm not really here to ask about the harem."

Kadin ignored his comment, and continued: "Your romantic lore creates a great mystery about harems with beautiful young women. But there was never more than one harem in the Ottoman Empire, only the sultan's. Harems in other parts of the world were far more impressive. India's Mughal emperor, Akbar, was reputed to have had five thousand women in his harem. Sassanian kings had as many as twelve thousand."

"Thank you for the history lesson. Now I'd like to talk to someone who can tell me where I can find the Shepherd's Chamber?"

No one spoke up. As Indy waited, he noticed a large book that was open at the end of the table. At first, he thought it was the Koran. But as he stepped closer, he saw that it was a cookbook of Turkish recipes, printed in Turkish and English. The page on the left showed a busy kitchen scene, and on the right was a recipe for a salad. The salad included: diced tomatoes, green peppers and onions, and cucumbers, hot green chili, parsley, vinegar, oil, and lemon. It wasn't the contents of the salad, though, that caught Indy's attention. It was the name of it: Shepherd's salad.

Indy's eyes widened. *Shepherd's salad, kitchen.*

"Who opened the cookbook?" Indy asked.

"I did."

He turned to see a plump, elderly black man with a shaved head. "I order the meals for the harem."

“Did the museum curator tell you I was coming?”

He shook his head. “I never speak to him.”

“Can you tell me where I can find the kitchen?”

“Certainly, you can follow me. I’m going there now. My name is Veli.”

Indy wasn’t sure that was where he should go, but he didn’t think he’d find anything else here. They left the harem, moved into the palace and followed winding corridors through the rear of the palace. When they reached the kitchen, Indy thanked the elderly eunuch and asked him if knew where to find the shepherd’s chamber.

“Is that what you’re looking for? I thought you wanted some shepherd’s salad.”

“I’m not really hungry,” Indy said. “So where is the chamber?”

“I don’t know. I stay in the harem, for the most part. It’s a very large palace. Let’s ask the chef, Ahmed, he goes everywhere in the palace.”

As he entered the kitchen, Indy smelled herb-scented sizzling lamb and his mouth watered at the sight of a doner kabob, a famous Turkish dish with rolled lamb on a skewer. Men in white coats moved around, busy with their tasks, ignoring him. He stopped one. “Ahmed?”

“Which one?

Veli took his arm and directed him to the rear of the kitchen where a large man with a puffy chef’s hat was reeling off dinner orders. The eunuch addressed Ahmed in Turkish. Ahmed laughed as he replied.

“He asked if it’s a trick question,” Veli said.

“If it’s a trick, the joke is on me.” Maybe visiting the chef was a dead end. But where to go from here? he wondered.

The chef said something else and Veli translated again. “He says to look where they don’t serve food, because he’s never seen such a chamber, and has taken food to most, if not all of them.”

The chef said something more, and again Veli translated. “He suggested that you search high and low, then maybe you’ll find it.”

That’s a big help, Indy thought.

Suddenly, the double doors swung open and a pair of Gestapo agents with guns drawn burst into the kitchen. Indy ducked down behind a counter and reached into his case for his whip. He had no

doubt they were hunting him. The metal counter had two shelves and he could see the Nazis moving in his direction on the opposite side.

When they were directly across from him, Indy snapped his whip under the counter and laced it around one of the men's ankles. He pulled hard and the Nazi toppled over and was dragged halfway under the counter. His partner stopped, stunned, then realized what had happened and rushed around the end of the counter. Indy was ready for him, and knocked the gun from his hand. The Nazi rushed at him, Indy punched him in the gut, and they traded blows, one after another, until Indy ducked a swing, twisted the man around, and pushed him over his fallen colleague. As the Gestapo agent crashed to the floor, Veli slammed a pan against his head.

The other Nazi tried to get up, but Indy kicked the gun from his hand. He picked up a plate and was about to slam it over the man's head when the image on the plate caught his attention. A tower. "Hey, Veli, do you know this place?" He held up the plate.

"Of course. It's the Tower of Justice. It's right next to the harem."

"Let's go there."

The Nazi lunged for Indy, but he stepped aside and cracked the plate over the man's head. "I didn't want to do that, but you insisted."

Indy retrieved his whip and headed for the door. "This way," Veli called and led him across a courtyard, then pointed to a tower. "That's it. Good luck."

He loped up the circular steps to the top of the tower. Suddenly, the comment by the chef made sense. *Search high and low*. But what was up here, another clue?

He heard a warning shout, then a shot. He reached the top of the tower, worked his way around a huge bell and peered out a vertical slit. Veli lay on the courtyard floor, his body illuminated by lamplight. Footsteps pounded against the stairs.

Indy moved around the tower until he was opposite the doorway. He flung his whip around the chain at the top of the bell. As soon as the Gestapo agent appeared, Indy leaped up and slammed his feet against the bell, hoping it would swing forward and slam into the Nazi. It barely budged, but it set the weight inside moving and the bell clanged loudly. Indy desperately wanted to cover his ears, but he couldn't let go.

The agent worked his way around the bell. Indy recognized him as the tall agent with the scar, the one who had interrogated Kazak. As he looked up, Indy leaped on him, knocking him to the floor. They rolled about as the bell continued clanging, louder and louder as the weight moved faster and faster. The Nazi pulled Indy to his feet, threw a punch. The blow glanced off Indy's cheek, and now they were right under the bell. Indy returned a punch to the agent's gut, then another to his cheek.

The Nazi, who stood a head taller than Indy, seemed unfazed by the blows, as if they were mere annoyances. He growled through his teeth and lunged. Indy ducked low, wrapped his arms around the agent's hips, and lifted him off his feet. The bell missed a beat as the weight slammed into the Nazi's head. He slumped to the floor of the tower as Indy released him.

"That's for shooting Veli, who never did anything to you," Indy said as he recovered his whip.

He ran down the stairs and over to Veli, whose white shirt was covered with blood. Indy saw he was still breathing and cradled his head. "Hang in there, Veli."

"No, too late. Spring… spring of life."

"What?"

"Find spring of life." His head lolled to the side, his breathing stopped. Indy set him down.

What was the spring of life? He recalled the chef's comment again as he hurried across the courtyard toward the front of the palace. *Search high and low*. He had gone high, now maybe he needed to look low. But before he went anywhere, he needed to find Maggie.

He had a bad feeling. He doubted that she stayed at the ball and if she hadn't, she should have caught up with him by now. Something had gone wrong. Very wrong.

17
UNDER PRESSURE

Magnus Völler paced around the ballroom, sipping from a glass of wine, sampling trays of delicacies offered by fawning servants, and partook in conversation about the state of world affairs. Everyone wanted to know the German point of view. He tried his best not to sound arrogant or condescending to the representatives of weaker nations. But his mind was on finding the shepherd that Kingston had written about in his notes, and moving on to take possession of the Staff of Moses.

The Nazis, after all, were the people of destiny, and accumulating biblical power objects was their rightful mission. The quest for world dominance was as much a mystical journey as combat and physical conquest. It all began with the Thule Society, originally *Studiengruppe Fur Germanisches Altertum*, Study Group for Germanic Antiquity. Völler's father, Rudolf, an occultist, had been a founder. The Thule Society was the organization that sponsored the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, which Hitler transformed into the Nazi Party.

An elderly man with a white-fringed bald pate approached Völler, disrupting his train of thought. "I am director of the Rosicrucians of Turkey and I would be very interested in talking to you about our

philosophy and its influence on the Third Reich. You see, our emphasis on synthesizing the philosophies of many groups so that the adept can maintain maximum control and dominion over…"

"*Ja, ja, sehr interessant*. An interesting subject, but not one that I wish to discuss at the moment."

Völler turned away and walked off, his gaze sweeping the ballroom for a sign of his nemesis. Indiana Jones had managed to disrupt the interrogation of the curator and escaped with him. For the moment, that left Völler with Kingston's vague commentary. His notes revealed that the shepherd—whatever it was—would lead to the staff. It was located in this palace in a chamber that was under pressure. Did that mean it was under heavy guard, or what? He cursed Kingston for his vagueness, and Jones for disrupting his plans.

His men, all trained Gestapo agents, were furious and would show no mercy when they captured him. Discretion was not their strong suit, especially after they'd been embarrassed. But maybe it was time to change his strategy, he thought as he spotted one of his men moving through the crowd.

He motioned to him. "Captain Faust, what do you report?"

"*Schlechte nachrichten*. Bad news, Herr Doctor. Wolf is dead. In the bell tower. An accident with the bell."

"You mean Jones killed him?" Völler struggled to control his voice. He smiled and nodded at an Italian diplomat's wife as she walked past.

The barrel-chested Nazi ran a finger along a deep scar on his cheek. "It appears so. We are in pursuit. It won't be long before he is captured and eliminated."

"No, don't capture or kill him."

"What are you saying, Herr Doctor?"

"Let the rambunctious archaeologist locate the shepherd, then take it from him."

"He has a way of eluding us. What if he escapes with it?"

"He won't, not as long as I've got control of something he wants—Maggie O'Malley."

"A good plan, except… There he is now, here in the ballroom, no doubt searching for her."

"Very well. Carry on."

He would make his deal right now. Jones was a romantic, hopelessly so, and wouldn't desert her, not even if it meant losing the shepherd. Völler felt a piercing gaze from afar and spotted Jones across the room staring at him, moving toward him. Völler smiled, brightened. *Ya, ya, just what I want*, he thought. *Come, Jones, come.*

* * *

Maggie stood on a stone platform, her back pressed to a tall column. Her wrists were bound tightly by a rope that wrapped around the column. She was in the depths of the palace, in a watery realm of stone columns rising to a high ceiling. The ballroom was right above her and she could hear strains of the music filtering down a nearby staircase. At the base of the stairs, a few feet away, an armed guard stood silently watching her.

She'd given up talking to him. He either didn't speak English or was ordered not to say anything to her. She heard footsteps coming down the stairs. *Now what?* She expected to see Völler coming to interrogate her, or whatever he had in mind. But it was another guard, replacing his silent companion.

Maggie craned her head and saw that this Gestapo agent was young, probably in his early twenties. "I hope you'll talk to me," she said after the departing guard's footsteps had receded.

"I am not supposed to talk to you, but we are alone, and I would like to practice my English."

"Good, I've spoken it all my life. I'm from Ireland."

"Yes, good evening."

"Same to you. Why do you want to improve your English?"

"Because I am part of a group who will live in England after we take the country."

"How nice." This was going well, she thought. A real fun conversation. But maybe he would loosen the bindings on her wrists if she chatted with him awhile.

She would take advantage of that moment and send the young Nazi into the water. She would escape, find Indy, and tell him that she'd figured it out. She knew where the shepherd's chamber was.

* * *

If anyone at the ball was aware of the confrontations in the museum and elsewhere in the palace, Indy couldn't tell. The band played. The partygoers danced and chatted, drank and ate. No sign of Maggie. His feeling that something terrible had happened to her deepened, but he didn't have any ideas what he could do about it. Not yet, anyway.

He spotted Völler talking to a uniform, no doubt one of his own. He headed directly for the German, but bumped into a server man with a tray of food, nearly knocking it over. He apologized and worked his way around the man when an attractive raven-haired woman reached for his arm.

"You're an American. I heard your accent. How nice that you're here. I lived in New York for six years during the Roaring Twenties, as they say."

"Must've been interesting." Indy smiled and tried to move on, but the woman wasn't finished yet.

"Have you taken our tour of the palace yet? I'm in charge of public relations."

"I haven't taken the *official* tour yet."

"Then come back tomorrow. It's a very interesting palace. I can take you places most people never see."

"Oh, really. Can you take me to the Chamber of the Shepherd?"

She frowned. "That is very odd. I gave a tour earlier today to a party of Germans and they asked that very question." She leaned forward, whispered. "Very rude men, brutes, if you ask me."

"Sorry to hear that. What did you tell them?"

"I've never heard of that chamber. I thought maybe they were confusing the sultan's palace with another one. But they insisted it was here and demanded to see the museum curator. I told them he wouldn't be here until this evening."

Now Indy leaned forward and spoke in a conspiratorial tone. "Were you telling them the truth about the chamber?"

"Most definitely. I've been in every corner of the palace, even into the cisterns below the palace. An interesting place, but not on my regular tour. It's the ancient water source, spring-fed."

"Spring-fed? The spring of life! Where is it?"

"Oh, it's right below us." She touched his arm. "Before you go, let me give you something, a token of welcome from the Turkish

people."

"Oh, that's quite all right."

"No, I insist." She materialized a bulky handbag and reached inside. "I didn't give one to those rude Nazis today, that's what they were, you know. Here it is."

She handed him a small hand-woven rug. "Every design has a different meaning. The weaver communicates in the language of motif, a way of reaching out to God and man."

Indy remembered that he was supposed to stay alert for clues, and this definitely sounded like one. "That's interesting. What does this one say?"

She ran her fingers over the pattern. "This is the dragon print. It speaks of the joy of discovery. Let me wrap it for you." She took it back and rolled it into a tight cylindrical form and tied it with a string.

Indy took it, touched his forehead with one end and bowed. "Thank you, madam. One more question. If the cistern is below us, how do you get there?"

"Oh, that's easy. You take the stairway by the kitchen. But you can't go there tonight. Come back in the morning. I'll take you there, and show you the kitchen, too."

"I've already seen it. Thank you again." He stuffed the rolled up rug into his leather case next to his whip.

Search high and low. Spring of life. The joy of discovery. Maybe he was onto something, Indy thought as he spotted Völler in the crowd again. Then again, maybe what he took as clues had nothing to do with his search. The cook was just spouting off a cliché about a hunt for a lost object. The eunuch spilled a few final hopeful words about renewed life. But then he remembered how Kazak had described the clues. They were the kind that appeared to the seeker, not something contrived. With the hope that he was on the right trail, he approached Völler.

The Nazi archaeologist offered his hand, but Indy just crossed his arms, refusing to participate in Völler's ruse. "Good to see you, Jonesy. Enjoying the party?"

"Let's skip the small talk."

Völler chuckled, glanced up and down. "You're looking quite dapper, though a bit disheveled, and what's in your case there? Let me guess, a whip, no doubt."

Indy leaned closer to him. “I may wrap it around your throat in a minute if you don’t tell me where Maggie is.”

“Has your girlfriend taken leave? Sorry to hear that.”

“I’ll ask you one more time. Where is she?”

“I guess you’ve lost your sense of humor, Jones. I tell it to you straight. If you want to see Maggie O’Malley alive again, get the shepherd and bring it to me. Do it before the party ends. It’s getting late.”

Indy realized there was little he could do to Völler at the moment to force him to give up Maggie. If he wanted to save her, he had to act on his conclusions and hope he was right. “Okay, Magnus. I’ll play your game. But let’s play fair. Nobody follows me. I’ll get the shepherd without any help from you or your Gestapo colleagues. Just back off.”

Völler raised his hand. “Fine. You’re on your own. But remember what I said, if you want to see her alive again…”

“Yeah, I get it. And if you don’t come through on your side, I’ll destroy the shepherd so you can’t use it.”

With that, Indy disappeared into the crowd. Considering he didn’t know what it was, the comment was a bluff at best. But Völler seemed to buy it. He also apparently thought Kazak had told Indy the whereabouts of the shepherd and that the only reason Indy hadn’t recovered it was because of the Gestapo agents on his trail.

Indy saw a server heading back to the kitchen, so he quickly picked up a tray from a table and followed him. The server, like Indy, wore a white coat. Indy kept his head down and no one seemed to pay any attention to him as he propelled himself down the service corridor.

As soon as the server pushed through the swinging door into the kitchen, Indy set his tray down and continued down the hallway until he came to a door. He immediately realized that the lock had been broken. Maybe Völler’s agents were already down there searching.

He moved cautiously down the dimly lit stairs, stepping lightly on his toes so as not to draw any attention his way. When he reached the landing, he saw a body of placid water and several columns rising from it, bracing the palace floor.

He heard a muffled sound, turned to his right, and saw something that didn’t make sense. A man in a Gestapo uniform was gagged and

tied to one of the pillars. What the hell was going on? He stepped forward and reached for the gag.

"Leave it!"

He spun around at the sound of the voice and smiled. "Maggie, I thought you were the captive."

"I was, but the tide has turned. He didn't know I was a trained agent in my own right."

He stepped over to her, hugged her. "I'll have to watch out for you so *I* don't end up strapped to a column."

She pushed away from him. "Indy, I think I know where the Chamber of the Shepherd is."

Indy turned to the dark waters. "Where?"

"Kingston said it was under pressure. It's under water, lots of pressure," Maggie said.

"Yeah, it makes sense."

"How did you find me?" she asked.

"It was an accident. I heard about the cistern down here and figured out the same thing you did. I just didn't know that you and this guy would be down here waiting for me."

"It's all working out, then," she said.

Indy stared into the dark waters. "We haven't found the shepherd yet."

"No, but I came across something interesting. Come see."

She moved along the rim of the cistern, edging her way around a couple of columns until she stopped and pointed at a huge spool of cable. Indy followed the cable into the cistern. The water was black, making it impossible to see into the depths. Indy leaned over, tugged on the cable, and grunted.

He brushed off his hands. "It's attached to something down there. Even if I dove down there, I wouldn't be able to see anything."

"Take a look at this, Indy." A gas-powered motor was connected to the rear of the spool of cable. Maggie flipped the switch. At first, it seemed nothing happened. Then they both turned their gaze back to the water, noticing a subtle change on the surface. They moved closer, peered down. An electric light beamed from far below the surface.

"Good job. Now I've got a good reason to take a closer look." Indy stripped off his soiled white coat, set it down next to his leather case,

and slipped off his shoes. He smiled, pulled off the bow tie. “Don’t think I’ll need this down there.”

Maggie looked worried. “It looks awful deep. What do you think is down there?”

“I’ll find out.”

“Be careful, Indy. I don’t want to lose you.”

“I’m flattered. And don’t go wandering off. I don’t want to lose you again, either.”

Suddenly, an image of a young woman flashed before his mind’s eye. He’d been blocking it, not wanting to dredge up the sad memory. But now he realized that Maggie reminded him of another strong-willed British redhead, Deirdre, who he’d lost in the Amazon fourteen years ago.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

He forced a smile. “Fine. Be back in a couple of minutes.” He took several deep breaths. Then another, held it, and dove into the black waters and down toward the light.

* * *

It all came together for Magnus Völler in a searing flash of insight that felt as if someone had poured a bucket of ice water over his head. He was about to join a toast with several European diplomats calling for better cooperation among their countries when he suddenly understood the meaning of Kingston’s cryptic message. He realized his strategy to let Jones get the shepherd was about to backfire. The artifact, if that’s what it was, was hidden in the cistern, the same place where he’d hidden Maggie O’Malley. He’d sent his younger brother, Fynn, down to relieve the guard half an hour ago. Fynn was reliable, dedicated, but he was no match for Jones and his damned whip. He suddenly pictured a disaster in the making.

He threw his drink on the floor, smashing the glass against the marble, just as everyone raised their glasses. He pushed through the gathering, knocking over an elderly Swiss diplomat, shouted for his men. Cursing Jones, he rushed through the crowd, and dashed for the stairway to the cistern.

18
THE SHEPHERD'S CHAMBER

As Indy approached the source of the light, he estimated his depth at forty feet. The light seemed to be emanating from inside a sphere about five feet in diameter that was fixed on a platform. He circled around it and recognized it as a bathysphere.

He remembered Kingston talking about his cousin in California who was building the first submersible sphere. The professor had been excited about its potential use in underwater archaeology and had even mentioned the Black Sea and the Straits of Bosphorus as potential sites. For years, Indy never heard any more about it. Then, in 1934, he read that Kingston's cousin and another man had taken the sphere to a depth of more than 3,000 feet. By then, Kingston was already missing.

He swam past the hatch on the top and over to the porthole on the side. He remembered reading that the porthole was made of quartz, which could withstand enormous pressure and was the strongest known transparent material. He peered through it and could see a panel of instruments, a bench, and on the bench was a metal box.

His lungs were about to burst and he desperately needed to get to the surface. He took one more look, squinted, trying to read what

was scrawled on the surface of the box. He could only read the first four letters: *Shep*. His lungs screaming, he kicked up. As he burst through the surface, he sucked in air. He had located the shepherd.

"Maggie, I found it!"

But as he looked up, a chill raced through him. Magnus Völler sneered down at him. "Good work, Jones. I'm glad you found it."

The engine on the cable spool fired to life. "*Ja, ja,*" one of the agents shouted, then shifted the gears. The cable tensed, groaned, and the bathysphere started to rise from the floor of the cistern.

* * *

The sphere popped to the surface. The engine pulling the cable was turned off and two of his men dragged the sphere over the lip of the cistern. Everything was coming together, Völler thought, keeping his Smith & Wesson .38 aimed at Jones. The wayward American archaeologist had led him to the shepherd and now Jones could only watch as he recovered the shepherd from the depths.

Maggie O'Malley was still missing, but his men would find her soon enough.

"Watch him," Völler snapped at one of the agents as he moved over to the sphere and peered through the hatch. He saw the box that Jones had seen.

Now he was excited about the discovery. He wondered what it could be that would lead him to the Staff of Moses. A map, perhaps? Or maybe a letter with all the information he needed? Would it be that simple? He hoped so. He leaned over the top of the sphere and cranked the wheel to the left. It didn't budge. He tried again and this time it moved half an inch. He didn't want to call for help. He applied more force and the seal on the hatch slowly gave way. He spun it with one hand, smiling, then pulled it open.

He didn't want to allow anyone else access to the sphere, at least not before he entered it. He turned to Jones. "Isn't it interesting that we started with a small jade sphere and now I'm going inside a larger sphere for the same purpose."

"It's a bathysphere, in case you're not up on marine archaeology," Indy shot back.

"I am aware of the sub field," he said with a laugh. "But the artifact I'm interested in right now is inside the sphere, not on the

ocean floor." With that, Völler climbed onto the top of the sphere and lowered himself inside.

* * *

Indy wasn't feeling good about the situation. He'd done everything he could and look what had come of it. He was held captive by the Nazis, caught without even a fight, and Völler was about to claim the shepherd.

His attention was diverted as the young Gestapo agent that Maggie had tied to the column re-appeared with Maggie in tow. A rope was bound tightly around her upper body.

"Put them together. It'll be easier to watch them," one of the agents said to the younger blond, who looked contrite.

"Are you all right?" Indy asked as he pulled his clothes back on and saw his carrying case beneath the clothes.

She nodded. "Sorry, I couldn't do anything to warn you." She stared at the bathysphere as Völler climbed out. "So that's the chamber."

"Yeah, and he's got the shepherd."

Völler clutched the metal box and congratulated the agent who'd caught Maggie. Indy noticed a strong facial resemblance, the same high cheekbones and square jaw, and guessed they were related.

"Welcome back, Ms. O'Malley. You're here right in time to see me lay claim to the shepherd."

Völler turned his attention back to the box. He examined it closely, frowning, shaking his head, obviously puzzled. "No seams, no latches." He shook it. "But something inside."

Indy knew, without knowing why, that he could open it. On impulse, he blurted: "You can't open it, but I can."

Völler laughed nervously, clutching the box protectively. "If I can't open it, then you can't either."

Indy didn't answer. He wished he hadn't said anything. Völler continued examining the metal box and let a couple of his men, including the one who had caught Maggie, to handle it.

After a few minutes, Völler turned to him. "All right, Jones. You said you could open it. So do it." He held out the box, but Indy didn't take it. "I said, open it. I want to see you do it."

He wished he'd kept his mouth shut. But maybe he could destroy the shepherd, like he'd done with the jade sphere.

Indy took the box. Völler turned to one of the agents. "If he tries anything, shoot him."

Indy sat down, resting the box on top of his carrying case. He ran his fingers over the box, but couldn't feel any seams. Immediately, the box started getting warmer and warmer as if his touch had triggered something in the metal. Within seconds, his hand felt as if it was glowing, but it didn't hurt. He wasn't getting burned from the hot metal. He imagined that the material was malleable and he could reach right through it to the shepherd. Suddenly, that was what happened. His hand appeared to sink into the box. He heard a gasp, muttering.

He felt the shepherd, but he knew that he wasn't supposed to take it out. His hand reached through the box and into his leather case. His fingers touched the Turkish rug that was rolled up like a scroll. He grasped it, lifted it up, through the box, and out the top.

As he held it up, Völler immediately snatched it from his hands, unraveled it. "What is this, a rug? How is that going to lead me to the staff?"

"I guess you don't know about Turkish rugs, Magnus. They each tell a story."

Völler examined the rug, shook his head. "It's just a dragon. Where's the story?"

"You'll have to find an expert to interpret it."

"You better not be lying."

"You saw me take the scroll out of the box."

"I'm not sure what I saw. I don't trust you any more than you trust me, Jones. But I'll find someone here who knows about rugs. Meanwhile, climb into that bathysphere, both of you. You're going down."

Indy felt the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed against the back of his head and knew they didn't have any choice. "Okay, we'll go. But do me one favor, Magnus. Keep that engine running when we get to the bottom, or we'll suffocate. It's pumping air."

"Of course, Jones. After all, we may need to talk again."

* * *

Völler stuck the rolled up rug under his armpit, like a rider with a crop. He felt victorious, but incomplete. He was anxious to find the staff, but to do so, he needed to translate the rug. He turned to his younger brother, who was standing by the motor as the bathysphere sank. “Fynn, listen closely. As soon as they touch bottom, turn off the engine. Do not turn it back on. You made one mistake today talking to the woman. Don’t make another.”

Fynn straightened up. “But you promised him you would keep it on so they could breathe.”

Völler waved a hand. “That was only to get them to cooperate. Psychology, Fynn. You give people a sense that they’re getting something for going along with you.”

He started to leave, but stopped, turned to his younger brother again, and spoke sternly. “Remember, do not give Jones a chance to escape and cause more trouble. And stay here until I get back.”

Flynn nodded, but looked unhappy. Völler shook his head and hurried away. Flynn was too damn soft. He didn’t have what it took to be a leader. He motioned to another agent as he reached the stairs. “Watch, Flynn. Make sure he turns off that engine. If he doesn’t, you do it.”

“Yes, sir.”

* * *

Maggie started feeling claustrophobic before the bathysphere settled on the floor of the cistern. “I don’t trust him, Indy. He’s full of blarney. If he finds out where the staff is, what’s to keep him from just leaving us down here?”

“Yeah, we have a definite trust issue here. My guess is that if he found out where the staff was located, he would definitely forget about us.”

“Then bloody hell, what are we doing down here?”

“Don’t worry. The rug isn’t the shepherd. He won’t find directions to the staff on it no matter how many experts he consults.”

Maggie looked mystified. “Then where is the shepherd?”

“It’s right here, in the box. He was stupid enough to let me keep it after being so possessive of it.”

“You jokin’ with me? How did you do it? It looked like you reached right into the box.”

“I suppose it did look like that. Trade secret, sorry.” No sense trying to explain, he thought, especially when he didn’t have any good explanation.

“So what’s in the bleedin’ box?”

“No time for that now,” Indy said, looking up at the hatch.

“Indy, there’s water leaking from the hatch! We’re going to drown!”

“I see that.” The light went out, plunging them into darkness. “Now I don’t see anything.”

“What are we going to do?” She tried not to sound panicked, even though she was. The sound of leaking water filled her head. The light flickered back on.

“Sorry, I did that,” Indy said. He reached for a lever. I think I can take this bathtub back to the surface, as long as that engine keeps running.”

“Then do it! The water’s over my calves. It’s rising fast.”

Indy pulled back on a lever. She felt the cable tense and the bathysphere started back up. “Thank God. Can you make it go faster?”

“It’s only got one speed.”

But Maggie’s relief was short-lived. Suddenly light went out, the sphere shuddered, stopped rising, and swung slowly through the dark waters. “Are you playing tricks on me again?”

“Afraid not. They shut off the damned engine! We’re dead in the water, Maggie.”

“Great. Are we going to suffocate or drown?”

“Probably drown, but let’s look for another option.”

“I can’t see my bloody nose, much less any option.” She thought of her mother and remembered her telling Maggie long ago about the wee folk. *They can always help you out in a fix, Maggie dear. Just call on them.*

Yeah, Mom, where are they? I’m in a fix and I need help. Wee folk, anyone, help!

19
RAMPAGE

The water rose to Indy's knees, quickly flooding the underwater vessel. He clutched the metal box to his chest. If it held any more magic, he could use it now. He squeezed his eyes shut. *Turn the engine back on. Turn it on.*

Nothing happened.

Then he realized that of course, there was another option. He placed the box between his knees, reached up and grabbed the wheel on the hatch. "Get ready! I'm opening the hatch."

At first, the wheel didn't budge. He grunted, tried again. It moved a few inches and water surged into the bathysphere, rising quickly to his chest, his neck, rising too fast. He shouted: "Hold your breath, Maggie." The water filled the sphere, burying them. But the wheel turned easily now. He pushed it up, grabbed the box, and kicked his way up through the hatch.

He tucked the box beneath his belt, turned around, reached back, and found Maggie's hand. He pulled her out and they swam for the surface. Indy slowed his ascent and touched a finger to Maggie's lips. For the second time in less than an hour, he popped to the surface of the cistern, this time without a splash or gasp. Maggie eased up next

to him and they both ducked behind a nearby pillar, silently gulping air.

After catching his breath, he peered around the column and past the rim of the cistern. He pointed toward one of the Nazis, then motioned for Maggie to swim underwater along the edge of the cistern. They ducked below the surface and swam about thirty yards before they came up for air. After checking the deck area, they quietly climbed out.

"I think there're two of them. Let's see if we can sneak past them, and get out of here."

They moved cautiously forward, keeping an eye out for the Gestapo agents. As they neared the massive spool of cable, Indy motioned for Maggie to wait, then crept forward. He reached for his shoes, coat, and leather case. He scooped them up, but one of his shoes clattered to the floor.

"Was war das?" one of them said.

Just a shoe, Indy thought. *Don't worry about it, fellow.* But one of the agents walked over, stared at the shoe. He looked up, startled as he realized that the rest of Indy's gear was missing. Indy stepped out from behind a nearby column, case in hand, coat flung over his shoulder.

"Well, I didn't want to go back to the party in bare feet." Before the agent could react, Indy lashed the whip around his lower legs and jerked his feet out from under him. Indy snatched his gun from his outstretched hand, then pulled the man to his feet. He wrapped his arm around the agent's neck, and pushed him forward toward his partner, holding him up as a shield.

"Drop your gun. Now!"

The gun clattered to the concrete. The man stepped out, his arms raised, and Indy recognized the agent that Maggie had tied up. The Nazi in Indy's grasp suddenly started to struggle, elbowing Indy in the side. The other one lunged at Indy, grabbed his wrist, and tried to twist the gun from his hand. Maggie rushed over, scooped up the other gun, then slammed it against the head of the young agent just as he pried the gun from Indy's hand.

The other agent broke free, spun around and tackled Indy. They rolled over and over until Indy's head hung over the edge of the cistern. He pressed his thumbs into Indy's throat, gritting his teeth,

squeezing Indy's neck as if he were wringing out a sponge. Indy felt his face turning red, he gagged, his arms flopped uselessly.

Maggie rushed forward, but the agent was ready for her. He grabbed her arm and tossed her over his head and into the cistern. The distraction gave Indy time to catch his breath and recover. "That was uncalled for," he said and punched the agent in the jaw.

The man fell back and Indy wrapped his legs around the Nazi's neck. He squeezed and twisted, and knocked the man's head against the floor. His body went still. Indy rolled onto his knees, and grabbed Maggie's hand as she reached the side of the cistern.

Maggie coughed a couple of times, then went right to work. She found the same rope that had bound her to the post, tied the right hand of one agent to the left hand of the other, then she and Indy dragged them to the column. She finished the job by tying the other hands of the two men behind the column, while Indy found his other shoe and stuck the metal box into his leather case.

Footfalls on the stairs. Völler appeared, his face strawberry red with rage, and behind him were at least six more agents. "Who keeps letting these guys in the door?" Indy growled. He grabbed Maggie's arm and they scrambled away, moving deeply into the cistern. No doubt some palace official was sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

Indy looked back and realized that Völler hadn't seen them. They ducked behind a column. The Nazi archaeologist hovered over the pair of bound agents, slapped one of them across the face, and spat something in German. "Nice guy, c'mon," Indy whispered.

They darted from pillar to pillar. "I don't see any way out. They might have us trapped after those two wake up and start talking."

"Over there." She pointed. "What's that?"

A steel ladder angled up the wall and led up to a trapdoor. They ran for it. Indy climbed up, then pushed at the center where two heavy steel plates met. Nothing happened. It felt as if a ton of concrete blocks covered the double trapdoor. He tried again, shook his head. "Don't think this is going to work."

A shout echoed through the cistern, boots pounded the floor. "Here they come," Maggie hissed. "Let me help."

She crawled up the ladder next to him, standing on the same step. He liked her closeness. If they weren't in such a dire situation, he would favor lingering—even on a ladder. She reached up and pushed

before he had a chance to help, and the trapdoor lifted several inches.

"Hey, how did you do that?" He shoved hard and this time the doors flipped open.

"Nothing to it," she said with a laugh and scrambled upward. As she stuck her head through the doorway, she let out a short, startled scream.

Indy smelled something sour and pungent. "What is it? What's going on?"

"You are not going to bloody believe it." She climbed slowly up.

He followed and the smell grew stronger, bits of hay fluttered down. "Go slowly, Indy."

They were in a huge cage, and they weren't alone. A full-grown African elephant stood in the corner watching them. "I think he was standing on the door a minute ago."

Indy worked his way over to the gate, unlatched it, but the elephant immediately moved forward and Indy had to jump out of the way, barely avoiding a swinging tusk. To his surprise, the elephant lowered to its forearms and knees.

"I think he wants to give us a ride," Maggie said.

"Why not." They both climbed on and when Indy tapped his heels into the elephant's sides, it stood up and pushed through the gate. A couple of chimpanzees made high-pitched sounds from a cage across from the elephant's. A white Bengal Tiger paced in a third cage.

"We must be in the palace zoo," Indy said.

"Good guess," she answered, wrapping her arms around Indy's waist.

The elephant seemed to know where it was going. As long as it was away from Völler and his gang, that was fine with Indy.

"Where's the box?" Maggie asked.

Indy raised his right hand, showing her the leather case. Suddenly, the elephant bolted, racing straight for a huge gate. Indy held tight, Maggie folded around him, clinging to him, as the elephant crashed through the gate and kept going. When Indy lifted his head, they were rampaging across the parking lot. The big bull elephant crushed the hoods of cars as if they were toys.

The beast seemed confused by the cars, as if they were competitors for the affection of a female suitor. He seemed intent on stomping over every vehicle in sight. A gunshot rang out, then

another. Völler and his Nazi crew raced across the lot. The gunshots only enraged the elephant. It turned and hurdled headlong toward Völler, who had ducked behind the black limousine displaying swastika flags. The elephant stomped across the hood, smashed the windshield and kept going. Völler and the agents scattered.

The beast charged through the entrance to the lot and away from the palace and into the narrow streets of Istanbul. It smashed carts, destroyed storefronts, crushed stands of fruits and vegetables, sheared away awnings.

"Hang on!" Indy shouted as the elephant's trunk tossed a bicycle over its shoulder. Groceries spilled from the basket, pelting them with pieces of fruit, bread and rice.

"I think we're headed for the spice bazaar," Maggie shouted.

"I don't need any nutmeg," Indy yelled.

He looked back and saw the smashed limousine careening around a corner, the windshield completely gone now. A Gestapo agent leaned out the passenger window, and started firing at them. "You okay?" Indy asked.

"Watch out!"

Indy glimpsed a banner stretching across the street coming his way. He ducked and felt it ripple over his back. The elephant veered down a side street, and headed toward a railroad crossing.

"Oh, no!" Indy groaned as he spotted a train steaming down the tracks. More shots were fired and the elephant picked up speed, pounding toward the train. The engine's horn blew just as the big bull raised its trunk, bellowed, and continued on a collision course.

The headlight on the train illuminated the beast and its passengers. Indy saw the startled engineer hit the brakes as the elephant barreled directly in the train's path. Then they were across and heading toward the train station. The elephant climbed to the station platform, slowed to a walk, and stopped as if it were waiting for a train.

"Let's change vehicles," Indy said, sliding down to the platform. They exchanged a look, nodded and ran for the train that was moving slowly now. Maggie leaped first, grabbed a railing to the door of a car and swung onto the lower step. Indy chased her, leaped, caught the railing, and landed next to her.

"We made it," he said.

“Good-bye, Istanbul!” Maggie answered as they slumped onto a seat and watched the city move past them as the train picked up speed again. But it wasn’t long before Maggie turned to Indy. “So, can you open the box now? I want to see this shepherd that nearly got us killed half a dozen times.”

He smiled, reached into his leather case, and took out the metal box. To his surprise, it now looked like a normal container with seams, a cover and a latch. No magic required. Baffled, he carefully lifted the cover and they stared into the box at another case.

“Well, open it,” Maggie urged.

He reached inside the box, and lifted the cover to the smaller case.

“That’s it?” Maggie said.

A conductor moved along the aisle in their direction, and Indy shut the case and the box. “Guess so.”

* * *

Magnus Völler finally caught up to the elephant. Istanbul police officers and a couple of zookeepers were attempting to calm it down, but they seemed more excited than the elephant at the moment. Völler straightened his coat, ran a hand through his blond hair. “Officer, did you see what happened to the couple who were on the back of the elephant?”

“There was someone on its back?”

One of the zookeepers overheard Völler and stepped closer. “Believe me, sir, no one could ride on this elephant’s back. He would throw them off and trample them to death.”

Völler walked away. Fynn rushed up to him. “We’ve checked everywhere. They’re not here.”

“I can see that,” he snapped. “If they were here, you’d probably be tied up to a post.”

Maybe it didn’t matter, Völler thought. Maybe he didn’t need the shepherd, whatever it was. After all, he had a spy in the palace, a woman who dealt with the public. She was also the mistress of the curator, and although she hadn’t known about the location of the shepherd’s chamber, she was confident she could find out whatever Kingston had told Mustafa Kazak about the location of the Staff of Moses.

Nepal

“I am certain that this is the actual staff that the Bible asserts Moses used to perform the miracles of the Exodus.”

— Graham Phillips, author of *The Moses Legacy*

20
THE CLOUD CITY

Maggie labored up the snow-covered slope, pushing higher and higher. Until this morning, she and Indy had hiked with five sherpas. But four of them had turned back after breakfast, saying that it was too dangerous to continue. The region ahead was considered haunted and known for freak storms. Many people, who had wandered into the area, had disappeared and were never seen again.

Of course, that hadn't deterred Indy. He was convinced they were going to find the Staff of Moses and they were close to it. Amazingly, one of the sherpas, an older man, had said he would stay with them. Maggie, for her part, found it hard to believe that they were going to find anything ahead, other than more snow and ice.

Her cover as a magazine photographer, as well as her job as a British intelligence agent, had taken her around the world. But climbing the Himalayas in pursuit of an ancient artifact seemed an unlikely assignment. When they reached Katmandu after fleeing Istanbul, Maggie dutifully telegraphed her home office and asked for further instructions. She figured she would be told to abandon the journey and return to London. To her surprise, her supervisor came back with a directive encouraging her to continue on. *Stay with Dr. Jones. Do not allow the Nazis to capture the Staff of Moses.*

She had gathered that this sort of trip was nothing unusual for Jones. From his stories, he'd traveled to some of the most remote places on the planet. It wasn't his first trip to Nepal, either, and she had the distinct impression that a woman was involved in his last trip here.

Pleased that she could continue, she'd informed Indy that he wasn't rid of her yet. He'd grinned. "I like your company and I like that you can handle yourself."

Quite a compliment, considering its source. But now she was getting concerned that he was taking Professor Kingston's notes too literally. After all, if the Staff of Moses was buried in the snow on a mountainside in the Himalayas, how would they ever find it?

Finally, after hours of plodding through snow and over icy rocks, they stopped for their lunch break under a crevice that blocked the wind. Maggie plopped down on a tarp. "I'm exhausted, Indy, and it's barely noon yet. Any idea how much farther?"

"Let's check."

He reached into the pocket of his parka and pulled out a leather pouch. He opened it and took out the shepherd. It fit nicely into the palm of his hand. He lifted the cover, revealing a compass. But not an ordinary compass. Ever since they had first looked at it on the train leaving Istanbul, it had pointed in a generally easterly direction, rather than magnetic north. The farther east they traveled, the more luminous the dial had become. Once they had reached Katmandu, the compass began to glow pale green. With each passing day, the glow had become brighter and brighter. Yesterday, it had started to blink every few seconds. This morning it blinked about once a second.

It was blinking now, even faster, maybe two blinks a second. "We've got to be close," Indy said.

"We don't know how this thing works, though. It didn't come with any instructions."

That didn't bother Indy. "I've got a gut feeling about it. Take my word, we're close."

* * *

As they carried on into the afternoon, Indy hoped his confidence in finding the staff was well founded. He kept avoiding the thought that

it didn't make any sense. What was the likelihood of finding an ancient wood artifact on a snow-covered mountain? For the past hour, he'd expected that they would come to a monastery tucked on the side of the mountain. But when he asked Nawang Topkay, their remaining sherpa, he'd simply shaken his head.

This morning the sky had been crystal clear, just like yesterday and the day before. The view of craggy white mountains in every direction, outlined against the dark blue sky, was breathtaking. He could see for miles and felt as if he were on top of the world. In a sense, that was close to the truth. After the other sherpas had turned back, Nawang told Indy that, in spite of the current weather conditions, to expect a storm.

"We'll find that monastery, I'm sure." Indy tried to sound confident.

Again, Nawang shook his head. "No monastery here."

Now the wind was picking up and the temperature began to drop. It didn't look good, but his confidence in the shepherd drove Indy onward. At the same time, he was getting nervous. They had to find shelter soon, before conditions deteriorated.

The trail curved around a boulder and Indy felt a stabbing sensation against his leg right behind the pocket with the shepherd. He winced, wondering if it was just a tired muscle twitching under the strain of the hike. Nawang abruptly stopped and pointed to the snow.

"What is it?" Indy asked.

Footprints appeared on the trail. It was hard to believe that anyone could be out here, unless a monastery was nearby.

"Ghost prints," Nawang said.

Snow swirled around them, blocking their view. Suddenly, a spear slammed into a snowbank at the base of the boulder. Indy jumped, looked up. Several burly, fierce-looking Nepali men armed with harpoon-sized spears and muskets leaped down from the boulder, surrounding them. They were dressed in fur hats, and wore fur-lined armor, woven kilts over leggings and boots.

One of the men exchanged a few sharp words with Nawang, who turned to Indy. "We are prisoners. He says we go with them."

"What if we refuse?"

Nawang, a small man with a spark plug body, salt and pepper hair and a scraggly goatee, pointed down the steep slope. "They

throw us off the mountain. I tell you, Jones, best to go with them."

"I agree," Maggie said. "Let's go see what they want. Beats getting thrown off the mountain."

One of the warriors waved a spear in a threatening manner and Indy remembered the stabbing pain in his leg near the shepherd. The idea of a spear wound didn't appeal to him. He'd never make it back down the mountain.

"Let's go," he said.

The warriors lowered their spears, closed in, patted their clothing, checking for weapons. Indy lost a knife, his whip, then the leather pouch containing the shepherd. "Hey, do I get a receipt so I can get everything back when we leave? Guess not," he muttered when no one offered a response.

Then they were marching up the mountain as the weather went downhill. The wind howled, the snow whipped around them, the visibility fell to an arm's length.

Indy leaned over Maggie's shoulder. "This should be interesting."

"Interesting? I'm not sure that's the right word for it." Maggie spoke softly. "How about scary, frightening, or horrifying?"

"Hey, I was just trying to sound encouraging."

They plodded another half hour before the warriors stopped. No one said anything. No one tried to seek shelter. Indy looked over at Nawang. "What are we waiting for?"

"They wait for a messenger to tell us that it's okay to enter the city."

"City, what city?"

"It's called Suya Des. I have heard of it many times, but I've never been there. They say it can't be found unless you are invited. It is a great honor. Let us hope they allow us to enter."

"Did you know this was where we were heading?"

"I was hoping so. That's why I stayed with you."

A few minutes later, a young boy appeared. Indy didn't see him coming and didn't know where he'd come from. "The news is good," Nawang announced, visibly relieved. "We are all allowed inside."

A strange sound, like a buzzing swarm of bees, suddenly erupted, distracting the warriors just as they were preparing to leave. One of the men dropped a pack and the warriors gathered around. They talked excitedly among themselves, glancing over at Indy. The sound

seemed to circle around them. Sometimes it seemed to Indy as if he were only hearing it in his head, then it would be clearly audible.

The man who appeared to be the lead warrior opened the pack and took out the leather container. He motioned to Indy, who stepped forward. “He wants you to open it,” Nawang said.

The sound was louder now and seemed to swirl around Indy’s head, both inside and outside.

He opened the leather pouch, took out the shepherd. As soon as Indy lifted the top of the compass, the sound started to fade. The compass pulsated red and Indy knew they’d arrived. The warrior patted the air, indicating that Indy should carry it.

“The staff is here,” he said to Maggie.

“Where?”

“Wherever they’re taking us.”

Even though they’d been waiting here several minutes, Indy noticed for the first time that they were standing near a crevice in the mountainside. The young boy led them between high stone walls, and down a winding stone stairway. The wind died, the air felt warmer. The snowstorm vanished.

The steps were damp with runoff from the snow above. Moss and lichen grew on the edges of the stones. He pulled back his hood, unzipped his parka, and felt an unexpected moist warmth against his cheeks.

“I’m starting to thaw out,” Maggie said, loosening the ties on her coat.

“Me, too.” Indy reached into his pack, pulled out his fedora, popped it back into shape, and fitted it onto his head.

They continued down until they reached an overlook at the edge of the curving stairs. Nawang motioned for them to join him. A fertile valley with a stream meandering through it opened below them. Trees and gardens surrounded a stone city built on narrow streets that all snaked toward a central plaza. An impressive palace, built around a courtyard, was visible on the far side of the city. Just beyond it was an ornate temple that abutted a mountain wall. People were working in the gardens and moving around the city streets far below. None of them appeared to be wearing winter clothing.

“Suya Des,” Nawang said in awe, dropping to his knees.

Shambhala, Indy thought, recalling writings about the mystical hidden city described in Tibetan Buddhism. A few years ago, a

novelist, James Hilton, published *Lost Horizon*, a story based on that legend. For Indy, legend and reality had merged.

Oddly enough, the light seemed different here, he thought. After days of harsh bright light from sunlight reflecting off snow, it seemed dimmer. In spite of the warmth, it seemed that less light filtered into the valley.

"I think it's getting dark," Maggie said. "It's almost like dusk, but it's too early. The sun's still above the mountain."

Indy took out the shepherd again, lifted the top from the compass. The dial now glowed a brilliant purple, and a high-pitched whining sound emanated from it. The needle vibrated and pointed directly at the temple. The sky was growing darker by the minute. It seemed as if the sun was about to set. Then darkness slowly closed around them. As daylight vanished, the glow from the compass congealed and a purple beam shot out across the valley, striking the temple, illuminating it.

Mesmerized by the beam of light, Indy lost track of time. His entire being was focused on the temple, and then he glimpsed a bearded man, a shepherd with a staff standing in front of the temple, raising his staff. The image faded as the sky began to brighten. The beam vanished and daylight returned as life in the tranquil valley resumed.

"It was an eclipse, Indy. The moon passed in front of the sun," Maggie said.

Indy, shaken from the experience, closed the compass and returned the shepherd to the pouch. One of the warriors prodded him and Maggie with a spear, reminding them that they were captives. They continued the descent into the surprisingly temperate city, tucked away in the high Himalayas.

"Let's hope they have comfortable beds for their prisoners," Maggie said. "I could sleep twelve hours, easily."

"Let's find out what they know about the Staff of Moses first. Then we can see about accommodations."

"It seems such an unlikely place for a biblical artifact," she replied, shaking her head.

"Yeah, makes for a good hiding place. How are you going to find the staff if you can't find the city, and don't even know that it exists?"

"I get your point."

On the way down, they passed several buildings that looked as if they were carved from the mountainside. Prayer flags flew from the rooftops. When they reached the city, the warriors closed in around them and kept them moving ahead over a cobbled roadway. Indy noticed that the shops were well stocked, indicating that goods from outside the valley arrived here from time to time. Colorfully garbed Nepalese, curious about the strangers, stopped what they were doing and watched. He spotted a couple of children, a boy of about ten and a girl a few years younger, who had European features. He wondered what that meant.

They were ushered into the plaza, surrounded by their guards and a growing crowd of curious bystanders, who pressed closer and closer. The chief guard slammed his spear against the plaza floor several times and shouted for silence. The crowd instantly hushed, stepped back.

The silence was broken by a voice speaking English, “I knew it would be you. Welcome to Cloud City, and right during an eclipse of the sun. Very interesting.” A path opened in the crowd and a bearded man, sitting upright in a wooden wheelchair, moved into view. Indy’s jaw dropped. It was Charles Kingston.

21
ONE MORE SURPRISE

His beard had grown long and white, but he still appeared strong and robust, in spite of the wheelchair. Indy was stunned, trying to fathom what he was seeing. What the hell was going on? After all that they'd gone through to get here, how could Kingston be alive?

"No doubt you are confused, Indy. I'll explain everything. But first please introduce me to your adventurous traveling companion."

Maggie shook his hand, but Indy could tell that she wasn't very pleased to meet him.

"Nice to meet you," Kingston said. "You are not prisoners here. You are my guests. I know you are both tired, so why don't you go to your rooms and rest. We'll gather at dinner, and you can meet Bethany, my wonderful nurse and companion, and afterwards I'll tell you my story."

"It's great to see you again," Indy said. "But I think we deserve an explanation *right now*. I don't want to wait until after dinner."

Kingston threw up his hands and laughed. "Of course. I should've known. You always wanted answers right away. I was only attempting to play the role of accommodating host."

"Where's Bethany now?" Maggie asked.

He glanced toward the mountain. “I believe she is in the temple. She’s quite devout, and also is very protective of the staff, I might add.”

“So the Staff of Moses is actually here?” Maggie asked.

“Of course.”

Indy crossed his arms. “Tell us about it.”

“Let me at least make you more comfortable. After all, I’m sitting down. You should, too.” He raised a hand and whispered something to a young Nepalese man who had assisted him with the wheelchair.

While they waited, Indy shrugged off his parka, revealing his leather jacket that usually accompanied his fedora. A couple of minutes later, thick cushions and a low table arrived along with a pot of tea and three cups. Most of the people who had gathered had gone about their business. A few teenagers and children, who remained behind, sat cross-legged on the stone plaza.

They drank the tea in silence, Kingston neither explaining himself nor attempting small talk. Finally, he set his cup down and cleared his throat.

“Years ago, when I first became interested in pursuing the Staff of Moses, I heard the story of the shepherd compass. At first, I considered it an unsubstantiated legend, a mix of history and hocus-pocus. But as I continued my search for the staff, I kept encountering the shepherd legend.”

He explained that there were three shepherds that were created around 900 B.C., about the time of the Exodus. One was hidden in a temple that would eventually be the site of the cisterns below the Sultan’s Palace in Istanbul. A second one was hidden on Mt. Nebo, and a third, somewhere in Tunisia.

“Finally, I looked deeper into the matter and began quietly searching for the shepherd. I found the one in Tunisia, buried in the storage room of a museum in Tunis. I went from Tunis to Istanbul, and with the help of the shepherd, I located the second one. It was in a time vault at the base of one of the pillars at the bottom of the cistern. My cousin, Henry, the underwater adventurer, was exploring the Bosphorus at the time so we brought his bathysphere into the cistern through the zoo. And, of course, we succeeded.”

“Why did he leave his sphere there?” Indy asked.

“That was his first one. He abandoned it in Istanbul for an improved model, one that he would take to 3,000 feet below the

surface."

"Did you know the shepherd was hidden inside the bathysphere?"

"A worthy site, since few people ever entered the cistern."

"I wish that you or Dr. Kazak would've just told me about the bathysphere in the first place," Indy grumbled.

Kingston shook his head. "You know by now, Indy, that sacred objects cannot be found in the ordinary way. They are found by the seeker who follows his heart and the clues that mysteriously appear along the way. But I don't have to tell *you* that."

He paused, poured himself more tea, offering it first to Maggie and Indy. "As you can see, I also faced serious challenges myself in my attempt to find the staff."

"What happened?" Maggie asked, encouraging him to explain.

"Halfway up the mountain, our party was nearly buried by an avalanche. My spine was crushed. I laid helpless in the snow, freezing to death. I was on the edge of death when I was found and carried into the city by the royal guard, the same warriors who brought you here. They never leave a body on the mountainside. It's very bad luck. They thought I would die and they would bury me here."

"But you recovered," Indy said.

Kingston tapped a hand against the wheelchair. "In a manner of speaking. They found the compass and knew what it was. It was decided that if I was worthy enough to find the shepherd, then I was worthy enough to be saved."

"How did they know about the shepherd?"

"Patience, Indy. You'll have all of your answers in time. Right now, I'm telling you *my* story." His voice was firm and Indy knew he wasn't going to learn any more about the city until Kingston was ready to talk about it.

"How did the people here save you?" Maggie asked.

"They took me to the chamber where the Staff of Moses was being kept, and I stirred back into consciousness. My blood warmed, my frostbite receded. I became lucid and I realized where I was, that the staff was healing me. That's when I shouted for help. I told them to stop."

"You mean you didn't want to be healed?" Maggie asked.

"Of course I wanted to walk again. But I've studied ancient power objects my entire career and I understand the consequences of

calling on those powers. It's a path to obsession and eventually self-destruction. You are never the same again."

"How did the staff get here?" Indy asked. "What is this place?"

"Suya Des is all about the staff. The city was founded by adepts, spiritually evolved souls. They called themselves the Guardians of the Staff. Some were Nepali monks, others came from Europe and the Middle East, and elsewhere. Some of their descendants still live here."

"How did they find this place?" he asked.

"They didn't really find it, they created it, in essence with the staff. Even though the city is locked in a frozen Himalayan environment, it's kept pleasant and habitable, and also supplied with fresh drinking water, through the power of the Staff of Moses."

Indy was still baffled by Kingston's disappearance. "Why didn't you write to anyone to say you're still alive?"

Kingston shook his head. "Far too dangerous. A letter would attract attention and bring people here, including wrong-minded people. Suya Des is difficult to find, but not impossible."

"Why didn't you leave?" Maggie asked. "Sherpas could've carried you down the mountain on a stretcher."

"You don't understand. Unfortunately, I am dependent on the staff. It provides me sustenance. I would die if I were separated from it."

"But we came here to get it, following your instructions," Indy said.

"Unfortunately, that was a mistake. Our friend, Archie Tan, shouldn't have gotten you involved."

"Charles, the reason Archie alerted me was that a certain wrong-headed menace, named Magnus Völler, was threatening him if he didn't turn over the jade sphere and tell everything he knew about you and your quest."

"Oh, dear. I'm sorry for Archie. What is wrong with Magnus? It's hard to believe he was one of my best students."

"Until you threw him out of the program for acting on his own, and almost killing me in the process."

"I haven't forgotten, Indy. But the staff is safe here."

Maggie set down her cup of tea. "Dr. Kingston, maybe it would be better if the staff were in the hands of people who could protect it from the Germans, and protect you."

“It’s only a matter of time before Völler finds this place,” Indy added.

Kingston frowned, turned to the head of the royal guard and spoke in Nepalese. The burly warrior shook his head forcefully as he answered brusquely. Kingston turned back to Indy. “He basically said, ‘Poppycock.’ He has five hundred warriors defending the city. No army can make it up the mountain without us knowing it. We are completely safe here.”

A deep rumbling sound caught Indy’s attention. It seemed to roll across the city like thunder announcing a rainstorm. Everyone looked up, but instead of a dark cloud overhead, a massive, twin-hulled zeppelin emerged from the mist. Swastikas adorned its vertical stabilizers.

* * *

There it was, the lost city in the clouds, high in the Himalayas, at the exact coordinates Kingston had given the museum curator at the Sultan’s Palace years ago. Why Mustafa Kazak had never told anyone the whereabouts of the missing archaeologist was a mystery, unless that was Kingston’s wishes. In that case, Kingston might not have died, but preferred to keep his whereabouts secret.

Völler stood in the cockpit as the giant vessel, the *Odin*, eased over the stone city. He spotted a building that resembled a temple at the edge of the city that seemed to merge with the mountain. That would be the first target to search for the staff.

The *Odin* itself was striking enough to frighten the quaint backward folks below. In fact, it was the largest airship ever constructed. Originally designed to be a luxury liner of the sky, it was taken over by Völler’s group after the Hindenburg disaster. The intent was for Völler to use it as a mobile archaeology laboratory. But that was only part of his purpose in the current excursion. It was also a warship, as the residents of this city in the clouds were about to find out. It was built strongly enough to carry a platoon of well-armed paratroopers, as well as fighter planes and ground vehicles.

He turned to the commander of the *Odin’s* weaponry and snapped an order that was quickly passed down the chain of command. Just in case the local armory decided to mount a

coordinated defense, Völler wanted to soften the resistance with an immediate air-to-ground barrage.

* * *

Maggie, like everyone else, stood in awe at the sight of the massive zeppelin filling the sky above the city. Suddenly, a dozen ropes dropped from the gondola and soldiers began rappelling to the ground. Bullets ricocheted off the plaza floor, raising a line of dust. "Völler's here!" she shouted and turned to run. "And he didn't have to climb the mountain."

Kingston's young helper was already wheeling him out of the plaza. "Jones, your legs still work," Kingston yelled. "Go to the temple. Save the staff."

"Right." Indy raced off, Maggie loping alongside him.

They dodged through the maze of narrow streets, working their way toward the temple. But after a couple of minutes, neither of them knew which way to turn. "Temple, where's the temple?" Maggie asked a teenage boy.

He stared at her, pointed up at the zeppelin.

"That is no temple," Indy said and they hurried on.

They turned a corner and abruptly came face-to-face with a pair of Nazis, who raised their bolt-action rifles.

"Halt!"

Maggie and Indy stopped in their tracks, raised their arms. "*Wer sind du?* Who are you?" one of the Nazis demanded.

Maggie smiled. "*Touristen*, just tourists, hiking in the mountains. *Ja, sehr gesund*. Yes, very healthy."

"*Gut für das Herz*," Indy added. "Good for the heart."

One of the soldiers motioned with his rifle. "*Du kommst mit uns*. You come with us. We take you prisoner."

Maggie shook her head. "No, no, no. We did nothing bad." She buried her face in her hands, sank to one knee, and started crying.

The soldier tugged on her arm. "*Gekommen, kommen*. Come, come, *Fräulein*."

Maggie bolted upright, and moving at the speed of light, kicked him between the legs, grabbed the rifle barrel with her left hand, slammed the other end of it into his forehead. He stumbled backward, eyes wide with shock and surprise, and crashed to the

ground. Next to her, Indy struggled for control of the other rifle. He and the soldier spun around and the rifle fired, the bullet zipping past Maggie's ear. She swung her new rifle, clipped the soldier on the back of the head, and he dropped next to his buddy.

Indy looked at her in amazement. "I'm impressed."

"You bloody better be. Let's go."

* * *

As they raced off again, rifles in hand, Indy spotted the zeppelin. It hovered low now, over the palace and soldiers were dropping down into the courtyard. Indy pointed toward it. "That way. Fast!"

They turned another corner and nearly collided with several members of the royal guard. They were shoved against a wall, disarmed of their new-found rifles. Several spears and a musket were aimed at them. Nearby, three Nazis lay on the ground, blood covering the front of their uniforms.

"No, we're not Nazis." He pointed toward the zeppelin, shook his head. But they didn't seem to understand.

One of the guards shouted something to the men and, for a moment, Indy thought it was an execution order. But he heard one familiar word: *Kingston*. The guard immediately lowered their spears, turned away, and rushed off.

"That was close," he said. "You okay?"

"We didn't keep those rifles very long," she replied.

"Easy come, easy go."

They raced after the guard unit, following them all the way to the palace. They stopped near a large tree with a massive trunk, watching Nazis and the royal guard engaged in hand-to-hand combat fifty yards away.

"Let's get to the temple while Völler's gang is occupied here," Indy said.

The temple was located higher on the mountainside beyond the palace, but Indy couldn't see any way of getting there. He jumped back, startled, reached for his knife, as something fell out of the tree. It was the kid who'd assisted Kingston. "The professor says you best go through the palace to get to the temple. That is the fast way."

"Doesn't exactly look that way."

"You take the guard's entrance on the side."

Rifles fired, spears plunged. Shouts, screams and groans filled the air. “Thanks,” Indy said, but the kid had already disappeared.

They hurried away and moved along the side of the palace to the unguarded entrance. They slipped quickly inside and followed steps leading upward to a huge atrium. He gazed upward to a mezzanine, where several men were tied together and marched ahead by Nazis. Others, in the atrium and on the mezzanine, were sprawled on the floor, dead. Shouts and cries echoed through the halls from interior chambers.

They crept deeper into the palace, staying close to the walls, ducking into doorways, peering around corners, watching for rampaging Nazis. The palace was modest compared to the expansive and well-appointed Sultan’s Palace in Istanbul. From the mountainside, Indy had seen a courtyard surrounded by a two-story building on four sides. Besides the majestic atrium, the building consisted of hallways with chambers on either side. The second level, he guessed, housed living quarters. They found a doorway to the courtyard, but it was too dangerous to step out in the open and expose themselves to Nazi gunfire that could come from any direction. Indy knew there must be a rear exit that would lead to the temple, but he was just guessing.

“Maybe this is the way out,” he said when they came to a door facing the rear of the palace. He opened it and glimpsed several Nazis pillaging through cabinets and drawers in a chamber. He quickly closed the door just as one of the Nazis looked in his direction. He heard a shout from inside the room. A gunshot rang out, blasting a hole in the door.

“Run! Damn it, run!”

They raced down the hallway to the next door, ducked inside it. Indy hoped it would lead outside, but he found himself in a small, darkened room. He closed the door, then quickly shoved a cabinet in front of it. He looked around for more furniture, but there was only a table and chairs.

“Do you think that’ll hold?” Maggie asked, catching her breath.

“Not for long.”

“Maybe they won’t look here,” she said, hopefully.

Then the door rattled, bodies slammed against it. Indy and Maggie pushed back on the cabinet, but the door was already

creaking open. They were trapped. But maybe Völler wanted them alive.

That thought was abruptly negated by the report of another weapon, followed by a succession of shots as bullets ripped through the door and cabinet, barely missing them.

Then again, maybe Völler didn’t care whether they were captured or killed.

22
THE STAFF TEMPLE

There was a pause in the shooting, and Indy heard a creaking sound behind him, then a woman's voice speaking in a crisp British accent. "Dr. Jones, right this way. Quickly."

An attractive, middle-aged blond woman stood in the doorway of a closet, armed with a sub-machine gun as well as grenades and a vicious-looking knife on her belt. She wore a backpack that probably contained more such deadly goodies. No time to ask for explanations. He and Maggie followed her through a three-foot-high door hidden in the back of a closet. Indy clambered down several steps and found himself in a dank, narrow tunnel.

After closing the door, she latched a grid of steel behind it. The ends of the bars were buried in concrete pilings. "That should hold them off," Indy said.

"Maybe." The woman picked up a kerosene lantern. "The tunnel leads to the staff temple," the woman explained. "That *is* where you want to go, isn't it, Dr. Jones?"

"That'll do just fine. You know my name, but I don't know yours. Who are you?"

"Bethany, Dr. Kingston's nurse." She motioned them to follow her down the tunnel. "I've known Charles for years. We met in Chicago.

By the way, I've heard a lot about you, Dr. Jones. Charles has followed your career from afar with my help. I come and go from time to time."

"I wish he would've kept in touch."

"He's been very concerned about intruders, and obviously for good reason. The Nazis have always taken an interest in the region, for its mysticism and legends. Last year, Himmler led an expedition to Tibet, supposedly in search of the roots of the Aryan race. Now they're here to steal the staff."

"Let's hope they don't have any better luck here than they did looking for a non-existent race," Indy responded.

"How did you know we were in that room?" Maggie asked as they continued walking.

"Because I was in there, too, spying on the bastards until you two rushed inside. You just didn't see me."

They reached a ladder that led up to another door. "We're right below the temple now. The door opens into a small room that leads out into the main chamber where you'll see a five-foot tall statue of Vishnu, the supreme being of Hinduism. In this version of Vishnu, he appears as Narasimha, who is man-lion, Vishnu's fourth incarnation."

"Are you sure this is the staff temple?"

"Of course I'm sure. The presence of the Staff of Moses presents no conflict here. Hinduism accepts all beliefs as alternate versions of the same truth. All power objects, such as the staff, are respected."

"That's unusual," Indy said.

"Their conflicts tend to be sectarian, internal. In fact, that might be the reason word got out about the location of this sacred city."

"So where is the staff? I need to get it out of here before it's too late." When she hesitated, he added, "Dr. Kingston asked me to take it."

She nodded, but didn't look pleased. "Walk past the Vishnu statue to the rear of the temple. You'll see three doors. The staff chamber is behind one of them. You'll have to pick out the right one. That's the rule. You have to prove yourself."

"Yeah, over and over again."

"I'm sorry, but that's the way it is."

"I hate to ask, but what's behind the other two doors?"

“Bad luck, and very bad luck.” It’s best to pick the right one and not find out anything else.”

“Are you coming with us?” Maggie asked.

“I’m going to guard this entrance.” She hitched her backpack. “I have a surprise, a flaming concoction, for any Nazis who come down the tunnel.”

Indy thanked her and climbed up into the temple. Maggie followed, but only after saying something to Bethany that he couldn’t hear.

* * *

Maggie was stunned by the encounter with Bethany, someone she knew by a different name. Artis Moore was a famous field medic who received medals for bravery and heroism for her death-defying feats in World War I. She was known as much for her combat role as her work saving soldier’s lives. Then she’d gotten involved in a sex scandal with a high-ranking member of the British Parliament. Shortly after that, she’d disappeared on an expedition to the Himalayas and was assumed dead.

She followed Indy into a barren room with a fifty-foot high ceiling and the striking Vishnu statue in the center of the room. Huge double doors at the main entrance were fortified with heavy bars, indicating serious preparations were made to defend the staff. Just as Bethany had said, there were three doors at the rear of the temple, each one painted royal blue.

“How are you going to pick the right one?” she asked.

He shook his head. “Good question. I’m still thinking about that woman back there.”

“What about her?”

“For a nurse, she was really armed to the teeth.”

Maggie laughed. “Yeah, I noticed. Guess she was prepared.”

“So which door would you pick?” Indy asked.

“That’s easy, the one with the staff behind it.”

“Very funny. Oh, what the hell.”

He reached for the door on the right. The moment he touched the handle, a pounding erupted at the entrance. Indy released the handle, as if it were burning hot, and spun around to see the

enormous doors shuddering under the impact of something large and heavy.

"Guess someone wants in. We better make this fast." He turned back to the three doors. "Think I'll try a different one." He reached for the center door and again, just as he was about to open it, an explosion from below rocked the temple. Dust drifted down from the rafters.

"I think they blew up the gate blocking the tunnel," Maggie said.

Gunfire followed, then another loud pop, this one Indy recognized as a hand grenade exploding. "Sounds like the nurse is in full battle mode."

"She's not an ordinary nurse," Maggie replied.

"I guessed as much."

With that, Indy stepped up to the third door, touched the handle. A silence fell over the temple. The banging at the entrance stopped. So did the gunfire from the tunnel.

He opened the door and cool air washed over him along with the scent of earth. Of course, Maggie thought, the temple backed up to the mountain and apparently was built in front of a cave. Indy stepped inside and Maggie started to follow, but as soon as she reached the doorway she stopped.

Pressure began building against her temples and spread along the sides of her head. She felt as if she were in the grip of a giant invisible vise. She had difficulty breathing and a shrill whistle-like sound screeched inside her head. She clasped her hands over her ears, staggered, and fell. Indy lunged to her aid and helped her as she crawled out of the cave. Immediately, the pressure eased.

"Maggie, what happened?"

She caught her breath, recovering. "Didn't you feel it, the bleeding pressure, Indy, it was horrible. I thought I was about to give up the ghost."

"I didn't feel it. In fact, it was just the opposite. The cave seemed light and airy. I felt really good, actually. Did you smell the flowers?"

The battering of the doors at the entrance started again. Maggie waved a hand. "Go on, Indy. Get the staff. I'll wait here. Just don't forget about me."

"Are you sure you don't want to come with me?"

"I won't be goin' back in there! You can bloody count on that. Now go on with ya, and hurry it up."

* * *

Indy couldn't identify the source of the illumination, but when he closed the door behind him the cave grew even brighter. Hanging stalactites and protruding stalagmites literally glowed in the cavern. Even though he was in a hurry to find the staff and get away, he moved cautiously ahead. In his experience, sacred artifacts, even within sight, were not necessarily within grasp.

He broke off a stalagmite that looked like a long, gnarled finger. He did so with regret that he was destroying something that had taken centuries for nature to create, but he needed to make use of it. Even though the cavern seemed to beckon him forward, the path between the 'tites and 'mites raised his suspicions. With each step, he tapped the floor with his newly acquired extra-long 'cane.'

On the third step, his suspicions were confirmed. A moment after he tapped his cane, several spears burst through the floor, like man-made stalagmites. In spite of triggering it with his 'mite, one of the spears missed his crotch by inches. He reached out and touched the sharp blade, swallowed hard, his eyes widening. What next?

He cautiously worked his way around the spear, tapping his way like a blind man, moving carefully through the deadly forest of 'tites and 'mites. He called on all of his senses, and then some. He stopped as he reached an opening. Then he saw it.

The Staff of Moses was suspended vertically in the center of the cavern, unattached by any visible means. The stalagmites and stalactites appeared to bend away from it. The moment captured his imagination, overwhelmed him, banishing any trace of cynicism. In his head, majestic, uplifting, angelic music played, filled the cavern, and he felt an incredible soaring sensation. He didn't want to move, didn't want the experience to end.

There it was: a simple wooden staff, but one empowered by the Source and wielded by an ancient leader whose name was well known to this day. In spite of the millennia since Moses' time, the staff appeared in good condition, as if it had just left its master's hand. He felt incredibly fortunate to have come this far, to have reached this moment, and again wished it would never end.

Indy's reverie was abruptly broken, snatched from him by an explosion that rocked the cavern. The bastards had broken through

the door and were surging on the temple, and Maggie was out there. Indy was torn between moving toward the staff and making a quick retreat.

He had an urge to step up, snatch the staff, and rush with it into battle to save Maggie and escape. But he recognized that would be foolhardy. Worthy or not, he sensed that another step toward the staff would result in instant death. Yet, if he left without the staff, he might never have a second chance to retrieve it.

* * *

The enormous doors at the front of the temple toppled with a thunderous crash, and the Nazis rushed inside. She reached for the door where Indy had disappeared, pulled on it, but it wouldn't budge. She slumped down as if to hide. But a moment later, they were upon her, pulling her to her feet, twisting her around, tossing her against the wall.

"Where is he?" one of them demanded, a hand clamped to her throat, his pale blue eyes burning into her.

She moved her mouth, but no sound issued from her lips. The pressure eased, and as she caught her breath, she recognized Magnus Völler.

"Where is your Dr. Jones?" he said through gritted teeth. His face, with its sharp features, pressed close to hers. His foul breath washed over her and she wanted to gag.

"Behind the door."

"Which one?"

For an instant, her eyes strayed toward the blue door Indy had entered, then she motioned in the other direction. "That one, on the end."

Völler shoved her away, stepped over to the door Indy had entered, tugged on the handle, throttled it, with the same result as when Maggie had tried it. He glanced over at her. "I *will* get in there." He motioned to one of his men. "Set the charges on this door."

"You're wasting your time," Maggie said. "You got the wrong door."

"No, you're trying to slow me down. But I'll play your game." He waved a hand to several of his men, who had gathered nearby. "Open

those doors right now."

He tugged on Maggie's arm. "You better not be lying. You pay with your life, if he's not in there."

To Maggie's surprise, the doors opened, one after another, on the first attempt. The men stared in. One of them shook his head, "Nothing. No, wait. There is something…"

A blast, then another, blew the doors off their hinges, balls of fire rolled out, enveloping the invaders, knocking them back. Maggie dropped to the floor amid screams from the burning men. She rolled over and over, away from the heat and toward the battered entrance to the temple. She crawled on hands and knees, but ten feet from the doorway, a hand clamped onto her ankle. She kicked and twisted and wiggled to free herself, but the hand held on.

"You're not going anywhere, O'Malley," Völler said.

Another contingent of Nazis rushed into the temple and she knew he was right.

* * *

Indy realized he had no choice but to get the staff, find Maggie, and make their escape. After all, as he'd told Kingston, he hadn't come all this way just to turn around when the staff was within reach. He had to make the effort. No choice in the matter. Still holding the broken stalagmite, he tapped the floor in front of him, took a couple more steps. Nothing happened. Another step and the staff would be within reach.

He heard two more explosions in quick succession, closer this time, near the rear of the temple. Dust rained down from the ceiling of the cavern, and his thoughts turned to Maggie again. Keep going, he told himself. She came here on her own volition, and she was trained to deal with adversity.

He focused on the floor, tapped again and watched the floor. Unconsciously, he squeezed his knees together, remembering the spears that had shot up from the floor. Nothing happened, but he wasn't convinced. He raised his eyes just as a dozen or more spears rained down from the ceiling of the cavern. One of them struck his stalagmite, shattering it, another skimmed his shoulder. He twisted around, there were spears on every side, boxing him in. He grabbed a

couple of them, tried to pull them, tried to rip them from the floor. But they were frozen in place, unmovable.

Frustrated, he shook the spears, but to no avail. The staff hovered just outside the corral of spears, out of reach. It might as well have been half a world away. Then he realized how he might reach it. He loosened the whip from his hip, stuck his arm through the cage. One snap of his wrist and he could snag the staff and pull it to him. He released the whip, but it remained curled up, stiff from the cold. He pulled it back in, stretched it out, shook it, and ran his hand over the length of it.

He cracked it a couple of times, testing it. Finally, when it was loose enough, he reached through the spears again and unfurled it, and snapped his wrist. The whip curled around the staff and he carefully reeled it in. As soon as he reached for the staff and snagged it, the spears started to lean away. He stepped through them, easily now, and headed for the door. The staff felt heavy and hard, and he realized that it had petrified. But there was no time to examine it or even think about what he held in his grasp. He had to get out and help Maggie.

Just as he reached the door, another explosion rocked the temple. The door flew off its hinges, slamming into him with a powerful force, knocking him onto his back, covering him. He was vaguely aware of the staff slipping from his hand, then everything went black.

23
ALL ABOARD

When the dust and smoke cleared, Magnus Völler stepped through the doorway to the cave. An arm extended out from under the shattered door. Völler stomped across the door, his two hundred and twenty pounds pressing down on Jones. No response from beneath the door and his arm didn't even twitch.

"Good-bye, Jones. You served your purpose. You led the way like a good guide dog. Now you're done."

Then he spotted it, several feet away in the rubble—the Staff of Moses. He was hoping Jones hadn't found it yet. He wanted it untouched, undamaged. He stepped off the door, bent down to examine it. Miraculously, it appeared intact, undamaged by the blast. And why not? It was a power object, one of incredible caliber, and one that he would put to use. It was not just a prize, a museum piece for the Third Reich. It was a weapon.

The crack of a .38 caught his attention. Then another and another. Reinforcements from the *Odin* had arrived shortly after the fireballs had erupted from the other doors. He'd caught O'Malley as she tried to crawl away, and secured her. Then he told the new arrivals to take care of the injured men. "If they can walk, help them

to the Odin. If they can't get up, shoot them here in the temple." He laughed, pointing a finger at the side of his forehead.

He kicked Jones' arm, stepped across the door again, and walked into the temple carrying the Staff of Moses. The survivors had been taken away; the dead lay in a heap near the man-lion statue. Several of the men waited nearby for orders. He ignored the scorched bodies, and studied the statue. He recognized it as a version of the supreme Hindu god. "Take the statue, it belongs to the *Duetsches Reich* now. Then blow up the temple, and get back to the Odin. We're leaving."

He walked away, carrying the staff, taking care that it didn't touch the ground. The statue would make a worthy museum piece. But it hardly compared to the staff. As he stepped outside, he considered seeing if he could destroy the heathen temple by pounding the staff on the ground, and ordering it to collapse. But some of his men were still inside. Besides, he'd already ordered them to blow it up with the explosives they'd brought. No sense wasting the power of the artifact when the deed could be easily accomplished through ordinary means.

He looked up at the zeppelin hovering a hundred feet in the air near the palace. O'Malley, he was certain, was already inside and secured. After all, he'd ordered three men to make sure that she made it aboard. They knew they were dead if they failed. He would inform her of the death of Indiana Jones, and then she would be his to toy with in any way that pleased him.

He entered the palace through the front door and signaled a communications agent that they were leaving. The palace, like the city, appeared empty now, the residents dead or in hiding, waiting for the sky dragon with its deadly passengers to leave. He walked beneath the Odin and tightened a rope around his waist. He was immediately pulled up toward the zeppelin. Halfway up he heard a blast and smiled as the temple collapsed in on itself.

"Farewell, Jones."

* * *

No matter what Maggie did, she couldn't escape. The brazen Nazis laughed as she struggled and they pawed her as they tied her to the line from the zeppelin and hauled her up. Unfortunately, Völler knew she was an agent. She was in trouble, facing interrogations, torture.

She didn't want to think about what might be in store for her, or what might've happened to Indy.

As she was lifted into the huge double-hulled zeppelin, she was dragged across the floor and dumped next to Kingston and his nurse. Both were handcuffed and gagged. The nurse's hands were tied behind her back, to her feet. She wasn't moving, and dried blood caked the side of her head. Kingston pushed up on his elbows and tried to say something through the gag.

A Nazi stepped up and kicked him in the side, then reached down and dragged Maggie into a small, barren room. He tossed her to the floor, and her head bounced off the wall. The door slammed shut and she was locked inside.

A few minutes later, she raised her head as she felt the craft moving. She closed her eyes, realizing that she might never see Indy again. She had no idea where the zeppelin was headed, but she knew there was a good chance she wouldn't survive the trip.

The latch clicked, the door opened, and Völler stepped inside, beaming with arrogance and pride. He gripped a staff in one hand and she knew it was *the* staff. "Yes, I have it, Maggie. It's mine. I'm sorry to tell you that Jones couldn't join us on our excursion. I'm sure he would've made an interesting guest."

"What did you do to him?"

"He did it to himself by searching for the staff. Appropriately, he died beneath the rubble of the temple."

"I'm sure that you're glad to be rid of him. He found the staff before you and he didn't need to bring along an army."

"That's the past. The staff is mine, I won. Now I'm going to put it away. I'll return later and we can chat. And don't worry. I've ordered my men to keep their hands off you. You are all mine." He laughed as he left.

She felt sickened by his mere presence. She couldn't imagine getting any closer to Magnus Völler. She would kill herself before she allowed the beast to touch her.

* * *

Indy felt pain, which meant he was alive. His body ached, something heavy lay on top of him. Darkness surrounded him. He moved his fingers, then his toes. One of his arms was pinned underneath him,

the other was stretched out to the side. He wriggled his shoulders, then his legs. He was bruised, he'd suffered a minor concussion, but he didn't have any broken bones.

He lifted up, grimacing as he freed his arm, then started to crawl, inching his way forward. He realized that the door to the cave had fallen on top of him in the blast. When he looked out from the cave, he realized how fortunate he was to be alive. The temple had collapsed and the door actually had protected him from a beam that fell across it.

He worked his way from under the door, and crawled over beams and roofing material, like a gopher burrowing its way out of a collapsed hole. He felt as if he was rising from the dead and he suspected there were bodies strewn throughout the rubble. He just hoped that Maggie's wasn't one of them. No sign of the staff, either. If it were here, it was lost in the rubble, probably destroyed. Gasping for air, he climbed to his feet. The first thing he noticed was the enormous zeppelin gliding low just above the edge of the city.

Dark, swirling clouds hung over the city. The weather was turning treacherous. Any higher and strong winds would batter the airship. The zeppelin wouldn't be leaving without Völler, and Völler wouldn't be leaving without the staff. Impossible as it seemed, Indy knew he had to make an effort to catch the craft and the line dangling from it.

The zeppelin made a slow turn, preparing to descend the mountain. Indy forgot about his sore limbs and raced madly away from the temple, toward the edge of the mountain. The line hung barely six feet off the ground. As long as his legs didn't give out, he had a good chance of catching it and climbing aboard. The zeppelin made the turn and was moving slowly in his direction at a forty-five degree angle.

He looked up to see someone on skis, wearing a white parka, climbing down the line and dropping into the snow. Then another and another skier leaped from the zeppelin. The first one skied directly toward Indy, who was forced to turn aside to avoid him. Indy maintained his balance and raced ahead. The other two skiers came at him from either side. Indy's only choice was to plow straight ahead. He raised his arms at the last moment and caught both skiers simultaneously under the jaw and knocked them onto their backs. He darted for the dangling line less than ten yards away now. He took three long steps, leaped, and his fingers grazed the line, then

slipped out of his grasp. He dropped face-first into the snow, gasping for breath.

The zeppelin continued down the mountainside. Scraps of wood from the temple lay in the snow around Indy. He spotted a rectangular piece of one of the doors, glanced down the mountain toward the retreating craft. *Why not?*

He scooped up the remains of the door, ran down the mountain until his feet slipped out from underneath him. He flopped down onto the door and slid down the mountain in hot pursuit of the zeppelin. Snow sprayed in his face as he clung to the door. He turned his head, blinking his eyes. The Nazi ski patrol was racing down the mountain after him.

One of the Nazis shifted his ski poles to one hand and fired a couple of shots at him as he niftily carved down the mountain, gaining speed, catching up to Indy. He moved closer, aimed. "You die!" he shouted.

"Wait!" Indy yelled as he noticed the jagged terrain ahead. "You don't shoot a gun on a snow-covered mountain!"

The skier hesitated, then hit a mogul, and catapulted through the air, tumbling over and over again. The gun fired twice before the skier vaulted over the lip of a ledge and vanished from sight. Meanwhile, Indy rocketed over the same snow-covered ledge and landed smoothly on the door as he continued down the mountain.

One down, two to go, Indy thought. But how was he going to fight off the ski patrol *and* catch the zeppelin? The double-hulled airship was staying low to the mountain, but was definitely gaining speed.

Suddenly, a deep rumbling shook the mountain, and Indy knew his life was in even greater danger—this time from a natural force. Avalanche! *That's why you don't shoot a gun on a mountain in winter, you idiot.*

He glanced back to see an enormous wall of snow swallow the other two skiers as it swept down the mountain. He sailed off another ledge, the door airborne, and saw something dangling. He was *under* the zeppelin. *Let go, now, and grab the line.*

A part of him resisted releasing the door. But another part of him knew it was the only thing to do if he was going to get onto the zeppelin. He let go and grabbed the mooring line with both hands. He swung back and forth in a wide arc amid a flurry of snow rising

from the avalanche. No one could see him. Still swinging, he slowly pulled himself upward, hand over hand.

But as he swept past the doorway, the snow cleared away and he glimpsed a crowd of armed Nazis. He quickly decided against climbing into a confrontation in which he had little chance of succeeding and a great chance of being thrown out the door. On the next swing forward, Indy grabbed a strut and let go of the line. He started crawling onto the hull.

In spite of the great view of the Himalayas, it wasn't exactly a wonderful ride. Besides the danger, Indy was cold and uncomfortable. At least, for the moment, no one was chasing him. Just as he settled down, he heard voices. He listened closely and realized that he wasn't alone on the hull. He crawled higher and spotted a couple of Nazi mechanics taking a break and smoking.

One of them spotted him, stood up, a heavy wrench in hand. He was tall, corpulent, and mean-looking. *Here we go again,* Indy groaned.

The Odin

So, the Lord said ‘Go down Moses, to the Egypt Land, tell him the Pharos to let my people go!’

— *Go Down Moses* by Louis Armstrong

24
NO ESCAPE

"What do you think you are doing? *Bist du verrückt?* Are you crazy?" Indy demanded as he approached the two mechanics. "Do you not remember the *Hindenburg*? That was what, two years ago? *Ja zerstört es durch Feuer*. It was destroyed by fire. And here you are smoking!"

"We're not near the fuel," one of the mechanics said, blowing smoke toward Indy. "*Wer sind du?* Who are you?"

"Are you the American they look to find down there?" the other mechanic said in broken English.

"Of course not. He died in the explosion. I am an American spy for Reichsfuhrer SS Himmler."

The mechanic with the big wrench tapped it threateningly in his palm. "No one told me about you."

"Of course not. You don't know everything that's going on. You are a mechanic. I bet you don't know where we are going now."

"Yes we do. We're going to the Bay of Bengal to rendezvous with the *Wolfram*."

"So you know something. But you don't know me. You don't *want* to know me. Now stop smoking, get back to work."

"Yes, sir."

As he turned away, Indy spotted the hatch the men had used to reach the hull. He hitched his whip, trying to hide it from view of the pair. He walked over to the hatch to make his escape, but as he stepped down the hulking mechanic took out a walkie-talkie. Indy quickly descended the ladder to a catwalk and hurried away. The mechanics were probably wondering what Himmler's spy was doing on the hull and starting to question his story.

He paused as he came to a catwalk crossing the hull, uncertain which way to go. He peered over the side, at least fifty feet down, but it was too dimly lit to see anything. He made up his mind, started to cross to the other side. Halfway there, he came to a ladder and decided to climb down to another catwalk. He started down, but stopped when he heard voices. A patrol of soldiers appeared at the base of the ladder.

One pointed, shouted: "Halt!"

"Don't think so." Indy turned to retrace his steps only to see the two mechanics rushing along the upper catwalk toward him.

The steel ladder shuddered as the soldiers clambered up. Indy loosened his whip, lashed it onto an overhead beam, then kicked off the ladder. He swung forward and met the charging soldiers with the bottoms of his boots. The one in the lead lost his balance, fell back, knocking the other soldiers down the steps. He snapped his whip to free it from the beam, but it didn't come loose. *Damn it, that's not supposed to happen.*

On the second try it slipped off the beam, but the delay cost Indy several valuable seconds. The massive mechanic, still holding the oversized wrench, thundered down the ladder. Indy ducked as the mechanic swatted the wrench at his head. He wrapped his arms around the mechanic's girth, and tried to shove him aside. But he might as well have been tackling a giant redwood. The beefy brute didn't budge. He grabbed Indy by the back of the neck, pulling him away, and was about to crack his skull with the wrench when it slipped from his hand, clattering down the metal stairs.

He growled and lifted Indy overhead as if he were a ten-pound sack of potatoes.

"You are in big trouble," Indy said. "Wait until Herr Himmler hears about your bad behavior."

"You lie, Jones. The whip gave you away."

With that, he hurled Indy head-first over the railing.

* * *

If Maggie had a way of jumping out of the zeppelin, she'd probably do it. Her chances of surviving the fall, even if she landed in a snowbank, were slim. But it was better than what awaited her in Völler's captivity.

She heard someone at the door and guessed he was back. She would defend herself, but there was only so much she could do, especially since her hands were still bound behind her back.

Völler entered the room and she glimpsed a couple of guards behind him. He spoke under his breath to the men, then closed the door. He stared at her, looking pensive. Something was on his mind and she expected it was time for an interrogation. When he pulled out a long knife, she was sure of it. He approached her without a word, grabbed her arm, and twisted her around. He sliced through the rope that bound her wrists.

She backed to the wall, rubbing her sore wrists, and watching as Völler reached into his pack again. He pulled out a canteen and offered it to her. She took it and drank deeply. Lowering it, she met Völler's gaze. "What do you want from me?"

"You'll find out. We have time to get better acquainted, my dear. I have some news for you, some interesting news." When she didn't respond, he continued: "Your Dr. Jones somehow escaped the collapsed temple and even managed to board the *Odin*. He's quite clever."

Suddenly her hopes rose. "Where is he?"

Now Völler smiled. "That is another thing I must tell you. He was attempting to reach the passenger quarters from the hull when he had an accident. He fell from a ladder inside the hull. My men are retrieving his body now."

"How do you know he's dead? You were bloody wrong before," Maggie reminded him.

"He is dead or gravely injured. He went down headfirst."

"Are you trying to make me feel bad, Magnus?"

That devious smile again. "Of course not. I just want you to know that Jones made a valiant effort to save you… or maybe it was the staff he was attempting to salvage. Whatever it was, he failed."

"Up your arse, Magnus Völler!"

His hand curled into a fist, swung toward her, but someone rapped at the door. He let his arm drop, scowled, went to the door. Maggie glimpsed a man with a scar across his cheek and carrying a falcon on his shoulder. He and Völler conferred in low voices. Völler snapped an order and the man hurried off. He turned to Maggie. "We'll continue our discussion very soon, Agent O'Malley."

With that, he strode off.

* * *

Indy's heart pounded as he was hurled off the catwalk and into the murky abyss. His arm flailed and he miraculously snagged onto a brace that held the ladder to the catwalk. He swung by one arm until he caught a bar running under the catwalk, then snagged the bar on the opposite side with his other hand. He hung there, holding his breath as the Nazis peered over the side looking for his body at the base of the dimly lit hull. The burly mechanic said he'd fallen under the ladder and probably had broken his neck.

"Then go find him," a soldier said. "Völler will want to see the body right away."

As the soldiers departed, Indy moved along the underside of the catwalk, hand over hand. When he reached the connecting catwalk, he turned in the direction the soldiers had gone. His shoulders, head, his hands burned, but he kept going. He stopped again, listened. He didn't hear any more sounds above, so he pulled himself up onto the catwalk. He hurried forward to the entrance to the passenger quarters, moved inside, then slipped behind a bulkhead as he heard voices coming his way.

Völler and a muscular scar-faced Nazi with a falcon perched on his shoulder moved past. As soon as they were gone, Indy headed down the corridor, retracing their steps. He stopped by a door, noticing the floor in front of it was splattered with bird shit. A key was in the lock. He turned it, carefully opened the door a few inches, peered inside. Maggie was pressed against the far wall, tense, troubled, her knees under her chin.

He quickly stepped inside, closed the door. Her eyes widened. She jumped up, rushed forward. "Indy!"

"Shh, not so loud," he whispered, hugging her.

“They said you were dead, twice they told me.” She squeezed him as if she still didn’t believe he was here.

He flashed a grin. “Yeah, I’m like a cat that way. I’ve been left for dead a few times.”

“How are we going to get out of here?”

Indy would’ve liked to continue with the hugging, along with some exploratory caressing, but they were still in danger. He reluctantly stepped back and hurried over to the door. “Hopefully, it’ll be easier than the way I got here. But I’m not counting on it.”

“I saw Kingston and his nurse. We need to help them, if we can. They looked as if they were hurt.”

“Yeah, and we need to get the staff back. I actually had it in my possession for about a minute.”

“Easy come, easy go.”

Indy stared at her in disbelief. His entire body ached from his recent aerobatics and hand-to-hand combat to say nothing of the battering his body took in the temple. “No, it was definitely *not* easy.”

“I was bloody kidding, okay? Don’t ya know feckin’ blarney when ya hear it?”

Indy managed a laugh. “Your Irish roots are showing, Miss Maggie O’Malley.”

“You mean my feckin’ Irish heritage? Enough blather. Let’s go.”

He shook his head, slipped out the door and down the hallway, Maggie right behind him.

Indy attempted to open the next door, but it was locked. He tried another one with the same result. Unlike Maggie’s room, there were no keys in these doors. He suspected that Völler had left Maggie’s room suddenly after hearing that the soldiers hadn’t found his body. “Kingston must be in one of these rooms. But which one and how do we get in?”

He heard footsteps coming down the corridor just around the corner. He reached for another door and felt a pain between his eyes. He shrugged it off, opened the door, ushered Maggie inside, then followed. She immediately turned around and bumped into him.

“Wrong door!”

He looked past her and into a mess hall where a dozen Nazis were dining. He started to back out when the door opened behind him. A pair of soldiers waited to enter.

"*Hereingekommen. Willkommen.* Come in, welcome," Indy said, sweeping a hand in a welcoming gesture.

He took Maggie's arm and walked in as if they ran the place. Suddenly, they were in the center of the mess hall surrounded by puzzled Nazis. Heads turned, voices murmured. A few of the men stood up, started moving toward them. Indy didn't think they'd fire any guns inside the zeppelin, but that didn't mean they were out of trouble.

"Indy, what are we going to do?" Maggie whispered.

"To the kitchen, my dear. We'll see what's cooking." He took her by the arm and led her toward the swinging doors. He glanced back, expecting the Nazis to follow. To his surprise, they stopped.

"Guess they're not allowed in the kitchen," he said with a shrug.

A few kitchen workers in white apparel scurried about, focusing on their work, ignoring him and Maggie. He spotted a door at the rear of the kitchen and headed toward it, moving past stoves with boiling pots of soup and goulash and a counter covered with trays of foods. He grabbed a handful of turkey, stuffed it into his mouth, a mistake.

Suddenly, a huge, jelly-bellied cook with a chef hat, apron and a menacing cleaver stepped around the end of the counter. Legs spread, cleaver raised, he shouted in German and Indy didn't need a German-English dictionary to translate.

"Out of my kitchen before I kill you!"

"Sorry, we'll take the back door."

"Stop right now! Who are you?"

"Just a couple of tourists hitching a ride."

"No, you are the thief, *ja*, the one who steals the Bible stories."

"What?"

The crazed chef lunged at them with the cleaver. Indy stepped back just in time, the blade zipping under his chin. He punched him in the gut and his fist sank into layers of fat. Maggie darted around him as the chef folded forward. She grabbed his ankles from behind and dropped the blubbery cook on his fat face.

"Good job!" Indy said, then looked back as soldiers poured into the kitchen. He darted to the stove, and dumped a huge kettle of goulash.

They dashed out the rear door as soldiers stumbled and slid on the slick kitchen floor. They found themselves in a hangar where four

bi-planes were suspended by cable ten feet in the air. Indy quickly rolled a heavy tool cart in front of the door and locked its wheels. He grabbed a ladder and dragged it over to the closest plane.

"Are we going to fly away?" Maggie asked.

"We'll see."

They mounted the ladder and settled into the cockpit. Indy pushed the ladder away, but the soldiers were already shoving their way into the hangar. They ducked down, but it didn't take long before the Nazis figured out where they were hiding. The plane started to swing as it was slowly lowered to the floor.

Indy saw the key in the ignition and turned it on. The engines revved up as the plane touched down. He took the controls, and started taxiing in a tight circle, with the plane still connected to the cables. The soldiers dodged around the hangar, attempting to mount the plane and avoid the propeller.

"The bloody bastards are closing in on us, Indy!" Maggie called.

"I see that. Let's go." They climbed out the open cockpit and along a wing. They leaped off just as the plane came to a momentary stop, held in place by the twisted cable.

Indy grabbed a lever on the wall, impulsively pulled on it, and the floor beneath the plane opened up. "Oh, *that's* what it does."

At the same time, the plane reversed directions as the cable unwound. The soldiers, charging after Indy and Maggie, pulled up short and scattered as the propeller and rotating wing came their way, and several plummeted through the open floor.

"Oops! Guess they didn't see that coming."

Indy and Maggie edged along the opening in the floor, ducking low to avoid the wing as it spun their way. Indy pointed to another door and they bolted for it, and into the hull. They ran along the catwalk, Maggie in the lead now. The catwalk cut straight across the hull connecting to the second hull. None of the surviving soldiers immediately gave chase. They were probably too preoccupied with the mayhem in the hangar.

* * *

Maggie saw it out of the corner of her eyes. Something sleek and fast and aiming directly at her head. She dropped to the catwalk and Indy toppled over her.

“Did you see that?” she asked as Indy helped her to her feet.

“See what?”

“There!”

She ducked and this time recognized it as a falcon, one with a mean disposition.

“Yeah, a Nazi bird,” Indy said, stepping ahead of her. “Let’s get going. Keep your head down.”

Just as they reached a connecting catwalk, a towering figure stepped out blocking their path. The hawk rested on his shoulder. “End of the road, or in this case, catwalk, for you two,” the man said in accented English.

Maggie recognized the tall, dark-haired Nazi as a German businessman living in London who’d been a double agent, working for both the SS and British intelligence. He’d provided the British government with valuable information on Hitler’s plans, but had disappeared last year after becoming a suspect in the murder of two British agents from Maggie’s Section D.

“Hello, Faust,” Maggie said, calling him by his code name.

“We meet again, my dear.”

“Glad you two know each other,” Indy said. “I hope we’re on the same side.”

“Don’t count on it,” Maggie said. “Now I remember you trained falcons to attack people.”

“This one is so well trained that it could rip out your eyes with the snap of my fingers.”

Indy reached for his whip, but the hawk dived and its beak slashed the back of his hand. He pulled it away, grabbed it with the other one. The bird circled around, dove again, knocking off Indy’s fedora.

As Indy reached for it, Faust kicked Indy in the head. At the last instant, Indy jerked his head and the blow glanced off his cheek. He grabbed Faust’s foot, pulling it up as Maggie kicked out his other leg and he dropped to the catwalk. Faust sat up, snapping his fingers, and Indy slammed a fist into his face. The bird swept down, striking Maggie in the shoulder, knocking her over.

Faust, on his feet again, exchanged slugs with Indy. Meanwhile, the bird swooped down, then hovered, its claws raking Indy’s neck. Maggie leaped up and swatted the bird away. Indy was taking

enough of a pummeling without the help of the goddamn bird, she thought.

The two men were on their knees, pounding each other. Maggie caught sight of the bird diving right for Indy again. “Duck!” she shouted.

Indy jerked his head to one side and the falcon slammed past his ear and struck Faust in the forehead. Man and bird collapsed. Indy staggered to his feet. Maggie moved closer. The bird’s neck had snapped. Faust’s eyes stared blankly ahead. He wasn’t breathing.

“They’re both dead,” she said.

“I think I lost another life myself.”

Maggie groaned at the sound of feet pounding the catwalk, coming their way. It wasn’t over yet.

25
GOD'S WRATH

Indy let out a sigh as he recognized Kingston's nurse, Bethany, rushing toward them. I'm so glad I found you," she said, catching her breath.

"What happened?" Maggie asked.

"I got away."

"How?" Indy was immediately suspicious. She didn't seem the least bit surprised that he was aboard the zeppelin. He also remembered that she'd said she left the city from time to time.

"I got friendly with the guard. He told me what was going on, that you were here, that you'd gotten Maggie free, that Völler was fuming. He was impressed that I spoke German. My grandmother, who raised me, was from Munich."

"So he let you go?"

She glanced at Maggie with a wicked look, as if they shared something in common. "Not exactly. I got him into a compromising position, you might say. Then I cold-cocked him, took his keys, and left."

Indy nodded. "I get it. You sweet-talked him into idiocy. Where's Kingston? Where's the staff?"

“I was told he’s with Völler on the bridge, and Völler has the staff with him.”

“Then let’s go.”

“Follow me,” Bethany said. “I think I know the way. I was held in a room close to it.”

Indy hesitated, looked to Maggie, who nodded. “You got a problem following the lady?”

Maybe, he thought. “You first, I’ll cover the rear.”

Maggie laughed. “Yeah, I bet.”

He had no doubt that Kingston’s nurse could lead them to the bridge. But he suspected that Völler was luring them there. He was tired of chasing Indy and decided to draw him into a trap using Kingston and the staff as bait. Bethany might not be working with Völler, but she might be carrying out his will—whether she knew it or not. After all, the story about the babbling guard being overpowered sounded suspicious.

They retraced their steps along the catwalk, but avoided the door to the hangar. Bethany led them along another catwalk, then up a ladder to a door that opened to a wide corridor. At the end of it, elevated and behind glass, was the bridge.

Indy tensed as they walked out into the corridor. It was all too easy, he thought. His instinct told him to back away, that this wouldn’t go well. Then again, eventually he would have to confront Völler, and they *were* playing on his field.

Maggie turned to him. “What are we going to do?”

Indy felt the zeppelin rocking slightly and remembered the storm. “Play it by ear, I guess.”

Suddenly, a door swung open on either side of the corridor and armed Nazis poured out, weapons aimed at them.

Bethany walked over to a handsome young soldier and stood next to him. “Sorry. But they were going to kill us—Charles and me. They offered us sanctuary, if I brought you in.”

“I sort of figured something like that,” Indy said.

“You bleeding traitor! How could you, Artis Moore! Yeah, I know who you are.” Maggie surged toward the nurse, but Indy caught her arm as the soldiers tensed.

The nurse backed away. “We didn’t have much choice, Maggie.”

But she wasn’t finished with Bethany. “Did you tell them about the city and the staff? Is that how they found it?”

"No, I promise you, I didn't. I wouldn't do that to Charles. There are lots of Nazis in Nepal. They must've found out from people in the mountains."

"That's partially true." Völler stood at the door to the bridge, towering over them, his voice booming. "The city was rumored for years among the mountain people, but we only verified the location after you escaped from the Sultan's Palace. The museum director wouldn't tell us where to find the staff, but his mistress found the exact location in a note from Kingston hidden in a novel, *Lost Horizon*."

"I've read it, the novel, that is," Indy deadpanned.

Völler walked up to Indy. "All along, I've known that I've been on the righteous path, and that I would take possession of the staff."

"I wouldn't call it exactly righteous, Magnus," Indy responded.

Völler gave him a bemused look. "I'm enjoying this immensely. I'll keep you around for a while, Jones. Just for amusement. Oh, by the way, Jones, the mistress was the same woman who gave you the dragon rug. Touché."

"Another traitor," Indy grumbled.

He snapped his fingers, pointed. "Bruno, show our guests how we deal with traitors. Do we give them sanctuary?"

The soldier, who had guarded Bethany, pressed his revolver to her temple.

"What are you doing?" Bethany yelled. "I brought him here for you. You promised us…"

"Too bad," Völler interrupted, then nodded to the soldier, who pulled the trigger. Maggie gasped as blood splattered everywhere and the nurse toppled to the side, half her head blown away.

"Now, bring our guests to the bridge. Dr. Kingston must be getting lonely."

* * *

Völler felt elated by events as he stepped back into the expansive bridge where Kingston was tied to a chair. He patted his old professor on the shoulder. "I'm sorry that your nurse won't be able to join us, Charles. She had an accident."

"You killed her after you promised to spare her."

“I know. I had more respect for her when she was fighting in the tunnel. She gave up and turned against your friends to save herself. I think she liked young Bruno, too.”

He turned away from Kingston as the captives were marched onto the bridge.

After his initial consternation, he actually was pleased now that Jones had somehow survived and boarded the Odin. He presented a challenge and Völler wanted the American to understand that the Nazis were the true Aryans, the pure blooded people who would rule the world. The capture of the Staff of Moses just confirmed it.

He smiled pleasantly at O’Malley, pleased that she looked so stunned after witnessing the nurse’s demise. She would present no problem. She knew she might face the same fate at any moment. He pointed to two chairs next to Kingston. After they were ushered to the seats, Völler dismissed all but two of the soldiers. The others would be standing nearby.

He placed a hand on the console to steady himself as he felt the *Odin* rocking again. The pilot had expressed growing anxiety about the storm. But that wasn’t Völler’s concern now.

“Jones, let me offer you a belated welcome to the Odin, the only double-hulled zeppelin in the world. The fact that the staff was hidden in Nepal points to the inevitable factor of racial superiority of the Aryan race, the heritage of the German people.”

“You’re a madman, just like your boss, Himmler, and his boss. Germans are Germanic, and originated in northern Europe.”

“That’s a lie, Jones.” He reached into a hidden storage space in the wall and took out the staff. He held it up like a king with a scepter. Then he waved it threateningly in front of Indy’s nose. “The Aryans came into existence after a divine thunderbolt shattered the ice that locked the world and imprisoned the race. It’s all part of our ancestral heritage.”

“Balderdash!” Kingston shouted. “Now I know I made the right decision to banish you. The staff in your hands is a sacrilege.”

Völler fumed at the old man’s insolence, and abruptly smacked Kingston across the back of his neck with the staff. Simultaneously, an enormous crack of thunder rattled the Odin, the winds picked up, and the zeppelin swayed precariously from side to side. He stumbled and fell, rolling across the bridge.

* * *

As soon as he saw the staff in Völler's hand, Indy knew something was about to happen. Night was falling and the storm was building. Dark clouds flashed ominously. The wind howled and the zeppelin creaked and groaned like an old wooden ship in high seas.

Large raindrops spattered the glass.

The moment Völler struck Kingston with the staff, the banshee wind wailed and the huge craft rocked. The bridge fell into darkness, tilted precariously, and everyone stumbled or fell. Indy toppled out of the chair, rolled down the angled floor, then back again as the bridge pitched in the other direction.

God's wrath, he thought.

For the next half hour, the storm continued, unabated, tossing everyone on the bridge back and forth until they found something to cling onto. When the calm finally returned, Indy lifted his head as the lights flickered back on. He spotted Völler on the floor, the staff laying nearby. Indy crawled toward it, but Völler grabbed it and stood up. The grumbling guards recovered and dragged Indy, Maggie and Kingston back toward their chairs.

Then, to everyone's surprise, the full force of the storm hit with cyclonic power and the *Odin* tipped steeply on its side. Indy grabbed onto a post, his legs dangling as bodies rolled past him amid shouts and screams. The tempest didn't just batter the zeppelin, it waged war against it, and the airship plunged and rose and tilted. It seemed to go on forever, and Indy didn't think there was any chance the *Odin* would survive.

The vessel swayed, rocking back and forth, pitching one way and then another, bodies hurled about in the darkness. Windows blew out, showering the wounded with shards of glass. A flash of lightning revealed Maggie wedged in a corner, and Kingston clinging onto one end of the control panel next to the struggling pilot. Indy, meanwhile, lashed himself to the post with his whip in the faint hopes that the airship would ride out the storm. It continued on throughout the night. Gradually the shouts died away, and the wind hushed to a whisper, accompanied by an occasional groan from one of the fallen.

When it was over and the gray dawn filtered through the windows, Indy realized the *Odin* would survive and that he'd fared

better than several of the others on the bridge. Two of the guards were dead or knocked out, the others had broken bones and were unable to get up. Warm air blew in through the broken windows revealing that the storm not only had battered the airship but had hurtled it hundreds of miles to the south.

While Indy freed himself from the whip, Völler crawled toward a corner strewn with debris. He reached for the staff, but collapsed on his face. Indy walked over and scooped it up.

He helped Maggie to her feet, then went over to Kingston. “I’m okay, Indy. Don’t worry about me.” Kingston stood, leaning on a chair that Indy had picked up. He showed no interest in sitting down. “I’m always sitting. You’ve got the staff. Congratulations. But now what are we going to do?”

Before Indy could respond, Völler stumbled to his feet, tottering forward like a drunk. “He won’t have it for long.” He whipped up a gun, leveled it at Indy, and fired.

* * *

Maggie screamed as blood sprayed and Indy, along with Kingston, collapsed to the floor. She rushed forward, crouched over the two men. “No! No!”

She couldn’t tell what happened. Were they both shot? Blood gushed from Kingston’s chest. Indy slid out from under him, rolled onto his hands and knees, lunged and tackled Völler. They tumbled over a couple of times, one way, then back the other, struggling for the gun. Indy twisted Völler’s wrist, then slammed the back of Völler’s hand against the floor. The gun slid away, right toward Maggie.

She grabbed it and, on her knees, aimed at Völler. “Don’t move or I’ll blow your bloody head off, you bastard.”

Völler raised his arms. “Don’t shoot. You can’t control the Odin without my help. We’ll work something out.”

“Are you okay?” Maggie asked Indy as he stood up.

“Kingston took the bullet. He jumped in front of me.”

“Too bad about that,” Völler said. “You were my target.”

“Now *you’re* my target!” Maggie hollered.

“Wait!” Völler shouted. “You shoot me and you are good as dead. You’ll never get off the Odin with the staff.”

“What’s your plan, Magnus?” Indy asked.

“I’ll land anywhere you want, within reason, and let you go. You can take the staff with you.”

Maggie didn’t believe him. His voice sounded false, stilted. He was just stalling. Suddenly, soldiers stormed the bridge, weapons drawn. “Drop the gun, Maggie,” Völler said. “You don’t have a chance.”

She knew he was right. She felt like pumping a couple of bullets into him first, but she knew his men would retaliate. She and Indy would die in a blaze of gunfire.

“I think we’re cornered,” Indy said. “Drop the gun.”

“And you give me the staff,” Völler ordered, triumphantly.

As Maggie tossed the gun down, Indy, staff in hand, grabbed her by the arm, jerked her backwards. She turned, felt the warm breeze through a broken window, then realized what Indy was doing. It was crazy, but there was no other choice.

“Ready?” he hollered, holding her hand.

“Get set,” she yelled back.

“Go!” he yelled, and they ran and hurled themselves through the broken window, out into the warm breeze, and into the void, leaving the astonished Nazis behind.

Blue sky and swirling clouds spun around them. Water rushed up at them, choppy waves, a sea that went on forever. Then it swallowed them, buried them, and Maggie blacked out.

26
PARTING WAYS

Indy lifted up on his forearms and looked around in astonishment. He remembered jumping, and he'd known it was the right thing to do. But once out the window, he fell into a dream. He had no recollection of the plunge or the crash.

Next to him, Maggie was sitting up, rubbing her face. The staff lay between them and looked undamaged. He didn't know how much time had passed or where they were. But as he focused on his surroundings, he knew he was at the bottom of an ocean. But there was no water. He saw sea grass with fish of all sizes flopping on it. A huge turtle crawled away from a manta ray that flapped its water wings and snapped its barbed tail. He smelled the ocean, but didn't see it.

"Indy?"

"Yeah, I know. It's incredible. The ocean without the ocean."

In the distance, shimmering mountains rose majestically toward the sky. Then he realized the mountains were actually enormous cliffs of water, parted and held back by the staff. He picked it up as he stood and turned slowly, taking all of it in, astonished at everything he saw. He heard a humming that grew progressively louder and finally dropped his head back and peered upward.

“I guess we haven’t been down here too long.” The *Odin* hovered above them.

“I don’t remember anything from the time we jumped,” Maggie said.

“Join the club. Maybe we’ll figure it out later. Right now it looks like we’re getting some company.”

Less than a quarter of a mile away, the *Odin* lowered to the seabed. A bay opened and military ground vehicles rolled out. Indy shook his head. “Völler doesn’t give up easily.”

Kettenkrads, which looked like a cross between a motorcycle and a tank, cut through the seabed, crunching coral, rolling over mounds of debris and sea creatures, heading right at them.

“This way, hurry!” Indy pointed at what appeared to be a huge black rock. As they ran closer to it, he realized it was a beached whale weighing at least twenty tons. They raced to its far side, ducked down inside its dorsal fin, hiding from view. The creature was still alive, breathing. If it rolled to the side, they’d be crushed.

“I don’t like it here, but I suppose it’s better than its gullet,” Maggie said.

“Hey, let’s not mix our Bible stories,” Indy replied as a couple of the vehicles rolled past them.

One of the roofless, one-seated vehicles with tank treads stopped near the mouth of the whale, and the driver climbed down and fired several shots. The whale shuddered, its blubber shivering against them, pressing them into the sand and stones and broken coral. “The bloody bastards think we’re playing Jonah,” Maggie said.

Another one of the vehicles rolled slowly along the side of the dying whale. The driver was examining the whale but the fin blocked his view of their position. Indy worked his way out from underneath the blubber and stood up. He had an urge to run up to the driver, and knock him off the Kettenkrad with the staff, but decided that was a bad idea. The vehicle stopped near the tail and the driver lit a cigarette.

Now was his chance, Indy thought. He unclipped his whip, took a couple of quick steps forward, and hurled it with full force. It wrapped around the driver’s shoulders, Indy jerked hard, and the driver fell off the vehicle, the cigarette flying from his mouth.

“No smoking!” Indy shouted and rushed forward, the staff raised. At the last moment, he shifted the staff to his left hand, and slammed

his right fist in the Nazi's face, knocking him out before he had a chance to call for help.

He retrieved his whip, jumped into the driver's seat of the Kettenkrad, the staff resting between his feet and against his shoulder. He motioned for Maggie to join him. *What's taking her so long?* He realized she was still stuck under the whale and rushed over. He grabbed her arms, pulling her free.

She brushed sand off her clothes, her face, her arms. "Thanks for not leaving me here," Maggie said.

"Hurry! We've got to go."

Maggie climbed on behind Indy; he shoved the drive stick into gear. They peeled away, the tank tread ripping across the drying seabed. Maggie leaned forward and shouted. "Where do you think we are?"

"My guess is the Bay of Bengal, the bottom of it!"

He glanced back to see a trail of vehicles in pursuit, but he was more concerned about what was in front of them. The shimmering wall of water rose thousands of feet, merging with the sky. He recalled reading that the Bay of Bengal averaged more than two miles in depth. All of it was now above him.

He clutched the staff in one hand, hoping that it was not only responsible for removing the water, but that it would continue to keep it away. He realized, though, that at any moment the phenomenon might collapse, burying them under tons and tons of water, instant death.

"Indy, they're catching up."

"I'm going as fast as I can." The water loomed less than a hundred yards away. Striking it at this speed would be like crashing into a brick wall. He glanced back to see the Nazi vehicles spreading out to cut him off if he tried to turn back. Then, to his amazement, the water parted, forming a wide corridor directly in front of them.

"Amazing!"

They seemed to be moving faster now, and the Nazis hesitated, as if not believing the water would stay away. That gave Indy and Maggie a chance to expand the distance between them and the pursuing vehicles. But Indy was forced to keep his eyes on the route ahead.

"Watch out for that rock!" Maggie shouted.

“I see it.” As soon as they rounded the rock, another obstacle appeared. “Hey, look at that!”

Indy slowed as they passed the remains of an ancient ship that stretched out more than two hundred feet. He would love to have more time to investigate, he thought. Another time. They continued on, passing creatures, small and large, that Indy didn’t recognize. A biologist could find enough material here for a lifetime of studies, he thought.

They drove on, the Nazi vehicles no longer in sight. In front of them, the passage continued for at least a quarter of a mile, but they never caught up to the wall of water. It continued to open up, parting in front of them, as if God’s hand were unzipping the bay.

“Any sign of the Odin?” Indy asked.

“I can’t see it,” Maggie answered. “But I can’t see much of anything above us.”

They might be out of immediate danger, but Indy doubted that they’d seen the last of Völler and company. He maneuvered around a formation of rocks so that they were near the wall of water again. Indy pointed to a school of deep-sea fish swimming alongside them. It was as if he and Maggie were traveling alongside a giant aquarium.

The terrain grew steeper and steeper. They were climbing out of the depths, and hopefully toward shore. The vehicle’s tank treads were definitely becoming handy as they continued their bumpy ascent. Hopefully, it would lead to land.

Besides the muffled sound of the Kettenkrad’s engine, the corridor was a vacuum absent of sound. They moved through ruins of an ancient city exposed to air and light for the first time in centuries. Everywhere in their path, the remains of the past served as a silent reminder that all things ended. And were replaced, Indy thought, as he spotted a city in the distance that appeared to hover high above them where water and sky met.

They were escaping the sea. But his moment of elation popped like a child’s soap bubble as a new sound reached him. Biplanes with Nazi insignias on their fuselages roared down the water canyon strafing the seabed with lead. Indy dodged behind a large rock as three planes ripped past them, machine guns chattering. Now Indy understood why the pursuing Kettenkrads had fallen back.

He pulled out, accelerated, darting between rocks and debris. A couple of minutes later, the planes returned. This time, Indy hid near

a huge rusted ship and bullets pinged off the wreck. They remained in the shadow of the ship as the planes made two more passes.

After the second one, Indy raced away. Then, suddenly, the city was within reach and they plowed ahead, bouncing their way into the port of Calcutta. They reached a pile of rocks forming a barrier between the land and sea. They dismounted from the Kettenkrad and climbed to a walkway.

A crowd had gathered to see the parting of the waters. People dropped to their knees and prostrated themselves. Indy, holding the staff, nodded and smiled before he realized that everyone was bowing to a white-haired man in a robe, that no one was paying him any attention.

"Who's he?" Indy asked a teenage boy.

"A holy man. He predicted last week that the ocean would open on this day, and then…"

The whining of the biplanes drowned out the kid's voice as the Nazi crafts roared up the corridor just behind the ground vehicles. In a few more seconds, the planes would strafe the crowd, killing and maiming innocent men, women and children.

Indy raised the staff and at that moment the water closed together, crushing the Nazi forces. Two of the planes were buried, and the lead one flipped over in the bay and sank into the depths.

"That's what he said would happen," the boy babbled, excitedly. "The water would close when invaders charged through the opening."

"Smart guy," Indy said.

Maggie hugged Indy. "It's over. We made it."

"Not quite."

The crowd, amazed by the water magic, now pointed to the sky as the *Odin* drifted toward the city. "Did he say anything about that?" Indy asked the kid.

"Yes, he did!"

Before Indy could ask for details, gunfire erupted from the *Odin*. The crowd screamed and scattered. But Indy couldn't move. It wasn't fear or even anger. Something else had taken possession of him, and he held his ground.

* * *

Völler peered through binoculars from his position on the bridge. He briefly spotted Jones on the shore, but the image jumped around as the big guns fired, shaking the lenses. He found Jones again, focused, and saw that he had the staff in hand.

What was wrong with him? The arrogant son-of-bitch just stood there as if he thought the staff was going to protect him. Maybe the ancient power object had parted the sea, just like in the bible account, but how could it protect him against bullets? After all, there weren't any guns in biblical times. He laughed. "Good-bye, Jones."

As soon as they descended low enough, he would climb down one of the lines and recover the staff himself. That was his mission. That, and to kill Jones, if he were still alive. He just hoped the staff wouldn't be damaged. He didn't want to end this expedition with a broken artifact. Now what the hell was he doing? Jones pounded the staff against the ground.

Suddenly, Völler's stomach knotted. He had a feeling that the staff wasn't finished exhibiting its powers.

* * *

Maggie peered out from behind a fifty-foot wide banyan tree as bullets ripped across the shoreline. What was Indy doing? Why was he just standing there?

She knew him well enough to know that he didn't easily run from trouble, but he wasn't stupid, either. She shouted his name, but he didn't react. Any moment now, the bullets would cut him down.

He pounded the staff three times against the ground, and Maggie simultaneously felt as if she'd been hit in the gut, the wind knocked out of her. She gasped for breath, then gasped again as a massive pillar of fire shot from the heavens and ripped through the double hulls of the *Odin*. It exploded in a massive ball of flames.

* * *

The moment the fiery beam struck the *Odin*, Indy snapped out of the trance-like state that had glued him to the edge of the water. He darted back to the shelter of the expansive banyan as burning pieces of zeppelin rained down. He wasn't sure what had happened. He'd invoked the power of the staff, but it was as if the staff itself had

taken control, moved his arm, pounded the ground. Or maybe it was the spirit of its original owner.

"Now I think it's over," he said.

"You're very brave," she said, hugging him again.

"I didn't really have a choice."

He spotted the kid again, motioned to him. "Is that what was supposed to happen?"

The boy looked puzzled. "I don't think so. The holy man said a man with a snake would protect us."

"Really, a snake? Sorry, kid. They're not my favorite creatures."

Arm in arm, he and Maggie strolled away from the chaos along a walkway through a park. "What are you going to do with the staff?" she asked.

"I suppose it'll be protected in a museum."

Maggie stopped, frowned. "Do you really think that's a wise idea? It sounds bloody stupid to me. I mean Kingston was protecting it in a hidden city in the Himalayas and look who almost got it."

"You're right. The Nazis are probably going to come after it again. But what should we do with it?"

Suddenly, the staff started transforming in Indy's hand. He quickly dropped it and when it fell to the ground it was no longer a staff, but a six-foot-long snake. The serpent raised its head, looking back at Indy and Maggie, then slithered off into a dense thicket of bushes and trees.

Maggie started after it, but Indy caught her arm. "It'll find its own way to wherever it belongs."

"I guess you're right… this time."

"Hey, speaking of being right, let's go find that holy man. See what else he knows."

AFTERWORD

Staff of Kings for years was referred to as the "lost Indiana Jones novel," and for good reason. It was authorized as an adaptation of the latest-to-come Indiana Jones computer game. Although I finished writing the novel long before the game came out, by unfortunate circumstances involving a shift in plans to downgrade the game platform at LucasFilm, the game came out as a surprise to the publisher. I had warned the busy editor at Ballantine Books, but she was more concerned and involved with Star Wars novels than ones about Indiana Jones. I'd always been told that Indiana Jones fan base, while enthusiastic, was too small to be taken seriously. That's why my novels appeared one after another without a word of publicity or promotion. But in a way I think that made them more intriguing for readers.

After writing six original Indiana Jones novels as well as the adaptation of The Last Crusade, I said I needed a break. Immediately, another writer was hired to continue the series. Years later, in 2008, I was asked to adapt Staff of Kings. It remained lost for a decade until I decided to revive it by creating a free audio edition of the novel. With the help of producer Jon Posey, who also works with me and Trish MacGregor on our podcast, The Mystical Underground, the audio was released one chapter at a time until the

full version became available in 2022. So now through the persistence and hard work of Indy primo fans Jared Feinstein and Dale Dassel, the story is available as a free e-book. Thank you, Jared and Dale!

Finally, I hope future generations will find these novels and cherish them as many Indy fans have done over the decades. I've received numerous emails over the years thanking me for the stories, often from fans who read the novels as teens and later re-discovered them as adults. What intrigues readers, I think, is not only the adventure of the quest from an earlier era, but also the exploration of the mysteries of the unknown from the ancient past, and the subtle role of magic in a world now dominated by technology.

Rob MacGregor
2/25/2023

"If adventure has a name... it must be Indiana Jones."

This slogan originated with Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom in 1984. For me, those words have always been true; Indiana Jones is the earliest memory I have in life. His silhouette, his theme music, and his very name have invariably conjured feelings of excitement and discovery.

I discovered the Indiana Jones novels in the mid 90s and read them ragged. In 2009, I remember following the buzz building about a new novel by one of the men who first brought new Indy adventures to the page, Rob MacGregor. As fans of Indiana Jones, we're used to disappointment, and so the eventual cancellation of the book felt like an inevitability by a corporate enterprise more interested in appeasing Star Wars fans. But I didn't give up, and neither, I later learned, did other fans who had pitched attempts over the years to resurrect this manuscript.

So now, some thanks:
Thanks to Dale Dassel for his initial efforts in salvaging this book. Those fruits took ten further years to ripen.

Thanks to Christian Guldager for his singular talents. He painted the artwork we now all see as a foregone representation of this story.

Thanks to Raiders Radio and Indymag for helping to chase down those spelling and grammar gremlins.

Thanks to Rob MacGregor for keeping the spirit of adventure alive through his writing. If adventure has a name, Indiana Jones may have to share it with Rob MacGregor.

I hope those of you reading this share those same feelings of excitement as this story is finally discoverable by all.

ThrowMeTheWhip
(Jared F.)
2/25/2023

ROB MACGREGOR is the author of nineteen novels, fourteen non-fiction books, and has teamed with George Lucas and Peter Benchley. He writes both adult and young adult mysteries, adventure, and science fiction/ fantasy. He is a winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for mystery writing for Prophecy Rock, the first of four novels featuring Will Lansa. Rob is best known for the seven Indiana Jones novels he wrote for Lucas Films and Bantam Books. Among them is the adaptation of Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade, which spent several weeks on the New York Times bestseller list.

He also has written several self-help books on dreams, synchronicity, yoga, and psychic development. In addition, he has explored the mysteries of the Bermuda Triangle in THE FOG, and UFOs in Aliens in the Backyard: UFO Encounters, Abductions, and Synchronicity, one of three books on synchronicity he co-authored with his wife, Trish. They live in South Florida with three cats and a noble golden retriever. Their daughter, Megan, is an aspiring writer and artist. In his spare time, Rob teaches yoga and meditation.

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Taking up his old mentor's quest, Indy embarks on a globe-spanning adventure of truly biblical proportions to find the Staff of Moses before it is claimed by his nefarious arch-rival, Nazi archaeologist Magnus Völler.

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INDIANA JONES and the STAFF OF KINGS

ROB MacGREGOR

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INDIANA JONES and the Staff of Kings

by Rob MacGregor

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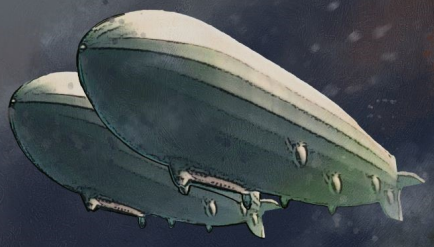
Taking up his old mentor's quest, Indy embarks on a globe-spanning adventure of truly biblical proportions to find the Staff of Moses before it is claimed by his nefarious arch-rival, Nazi archaeologist Magnus Völler.

Can Indy recover the Staff of Kings, or will an unholy messiah wield the power of God against humanity?



INDIANA

ADVENTURE
IN U.S.
$ 0.00
IN CANADA
$ 0.00

INDIANA JONES

and the STAFF OF KINGS

ROB MacGREGOR